

Sensing Incarceration: Mobility, Animacy, Becoming Human

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## Abstract

In this dissertation, I document how and why mobility in one “male” prison in the American Southwest unsettles incarcerated people and correctional officers’ constructions of what counts as alive and Human. For many captives and workers, physical movement signifies aliveness – meaning that incarceration forces these individuals to question just how alive they are and where, and if, they fit within naturalized Human hierarchies. Restrictive movement policies manifest what I call “unsettling mobilities” or unexpected movement by inanimate objects that upends bodily senses. Precisely because captives’ own movement is so radically constricted, thereby fundamentally challenging their sense of self, incarceration strips people of the movements which they intuit as fundamental to being Human. These anxieties are not restricted only to captives; correctional officers (COs) also feel as if their physical movement is radically constricted because of their work duties, and they worry that they are thus too similar to the incarcerated people around them. As a result, both captives and correctional officers work to eradicate these challenges to their Human status: COs rely upon racialized and gendered movement restrictions that reinforce enslavement tactics, while incarcerated people trade hygiene products, create art, and try to control the movements of those they consider non-Human to generate feelings of physical movement. These feelings lead both correctional officers and incarcerated people to link bodily senses tightly with movement, to position themselves and others within scales of animacy and Humanness. In this prison context, to be Human and alive is to feel a personal sense of physical movement while simultaneously marking oneself as an idealized being who controls the mobility of objectified non-humans. Ultimately, I argue that physical movement constructs the alive Human and that euro-americans often utilize mobility to maintain a colonial project that exterminates through incarceration.

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## Preface

The yellow butterfly smashed into my windshield as I drove down the two-lane road leading to the Desert Echo Facility (DEF). The butterfly had little control over its body collapsing into pieces or its delicate wings shredding so violently that I could no longer make out its form. My breath escaped me in this moment, and I worried that my need to move at quick speeds resulted in the obliteration of life. I looked at the remnants of the destroyed creature and turned on my wipers because I didn't want to see the results of my actions. Water from my car streamed onto the windshield as the wipers cleaned my conscience. The road I travelled, made of asphalt and working-class labor, ran through territories created by broken treaties and without Indigenous peoples' consent. In the distance, past tumbleweeds, dirt, and animals of all kinds, stood large, dark buildings and towers not yet fully illuminated by the rising sun. I passed a green sign with white lettering warning me not to pick up hitchhikers because there was a prison nearby. I wondered if anyone had ever opened their car door for an escaping incarcerated person. Few people drive down this road unless they work in the area or are being transported in shackles to cages inside in the prison. But the county fairgrounds were a short drive down the road – only one exit after the prison – so workers and captives at the DEF could sometimes hear echoes of concerts, fairs, and rodeos. I wondered what it took for visitors of these events to erase the people held in bondage just a half-mile away.

The research I conducted at the DEF changed how I write. Most of the time, when I sit at my computer, the drive to the prison flashes before me. I think about the songs I heard on the radio, the feelings of dread every time I arrived at the first security check-point, and the exhaustion of performing fieldwork. But I also see myself destroying butterflies and whispering that I had to kill these creatures to get to the prison, accident or not. And I remember, when confronted with a car covered in remnants of insects, washing away evidence of my destruction with wiper fluid or water from a garden hose – acts meant to cleanse myself of the blame for the creatures' deaths and to hide my complicity in the damage I created. And those butterflies would reappear when I wrote mythical, settler words such as united states and america. When recounting this story to a friend, she explained that while language repeatedly proves generative, it also smuggles in tacit beliefs that often hide asymmetrical power dynamics and historical violence. She reminded me of what my fieldwork participants demonstrated: small actions have big meanings. It is with these lessons in mind that I chose not to capitalize specific words and use the terms “incarcerated person” and “captive” as opposed to “prisoner” and “inmate.”

As I created this dissertation, I found myself pausing when I capitalized the words america, united states, white, western, europe, and euro-american. I wondered what my Indigenous and Chicano ancestors felt every time I hit shift on my computer to create a respectful grammar process for colonizers and their settling offspring. So, I decided not to do it. I purposefully keep these words and concepts in lower-case form to give readers pause; to bring some discomfort and to help everyone question why we honor the very peoples who cause so much destruction across numerous homelands. Like prisons, what has come to be known as the united states was built through the genocide of Indigenous peoples and the enslavement of African peoples. These violent processes have lasting effects that we are all complicit in, though

some need to carry more blame than others. To leave certain words uncapitalized may seem like a small action, but readers may be surprised at how many times they pause when they come across united states or american without a grammatical title. Still, in the end, many readers may get accustomed to seeing euro-american concepts challenged with appropriate force. I make an exception for “State.” I capitalize this word-concept, not to bestow respect, but to demonstrate how systemic violence can be embodied through bureaucratic policies and practices often rendered invisible by our own active ignorance. These small acts reverberate powerfully throughout the dissertation because they ask readers to question their roles in constructing hierarchies about who and what deserves honor and punishment in america.

My decision to use terms such as “incarcerated person” and “captive” challenges how State systems in america use language to construct threatening identities for people held in bondage. Words like “prisoner” and “inmate” are dehumanizing concepts meant to create binaries between good and evil, captive and captor, Human and non-human. State language removes context from incarcerated people’s lives in attempts to justify violence towards those targeted for imprisonment – individuals who are disproportionately people of color, queer, disabled, Indigenous, Trans, and who have access to fewer resources. When coming across words like “incarcerated person” and “captive,” I hope readers will take a moment to remember that I am talking about living people with friends and families, emotions, bodily senses, and histories. Participants are the entirety of their being and the relationships they create, not just moments in time or the worst things they’ve ever done. I chose these specific terms for research participants to remind readers that every person in this dissertation matters to someone or something and to demonstrate that incarceration is a systemic process that destroys specific peoples for the benefit of a select few.

As a country we have chosen to destroy beings that do not fit easily into a binary world, and we seem to ignore our own complicity in the perpetuation of violent systems. I am guilty of this brutality and so are most readers. This dissertation is an attempt to make it harder for people to perpetuate their ignorance or only hang their head in shame when confronted with their violence, as if the latter alone is enough to radically upend asymmetrical power dynamics. I hope *Sensing Incarceration* makes clear that we have all made power-laden choices to justify our actions, and that the consequences of these choices can’t be washed away or cleansed from our collective conscience. After all, I am proud of this dissertation, but I killed a lot of butterflies.

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## **Chapter 1** **Locking Down Correctional Threat**

On an unseasonably warm day in March 2001, prison administrators at the Desert Echo Facility (DEF) reported the deaths of two incarcerated men to the State corrections office. Prison staff found the men's bodies in two different housing unit cells hundreds of feet apart. The deceased men were both under the age of 35, serving less than ten-year sentences, and hailed from a city three hours north of the prison. Local policing agencies arrived on the premises and began numerous days of work where they took written reports, documented the scene, and catalogued what physical evidence they could find. Meanwhile, correctional workers locked down the facility – a practice where staff literally lock incarcerated people into their cells and prevent all “non-essential” visitors and traffic from entering the prison – and quietly began asking a question to each other and to the peoples under their control. It was clear that the men had died from strangling, but how did they die with no one seeing? After all, prison architects designed this facility with visual observation in mind and administrators staffed correctional officers (COs) throughout the compound, including the areas where the dead men resided. For days after the lockdown began, some incarcerated people yelled questions to each other through metal doors and concrete walls. Others passed notes attached to string from cell to cell, in attempts to understand who had died and what this would mean for their own immediate future. Over the next few weeks, investigators reported that the largest prison gang in the state ordered the murders due to territory disputes. The gang carried out the violence despite preventative security practices such as individual cells, locked and mechanized metal doors, and large security centers overlooking prison units and the larger compound. Despite these controls, the prison gang ordered the murders, and incarcerated members squeezed necks to prevent breath from the



dead men's lungs, bursting both the blood vessels in their targets' eyes, and correctional staff's illusions that they possessed perpetual control.

These two deaths have shaped Desert Echo Facility policies and practices, both institutional and in everyday life, in dramatic and consequential ways that outlast the men themselves. Upon completing the investigation, the state corrections department placed the DEF under permanent lockdown status for 18 months. Incarcerated people lived within their cells, alone, while COs placed food trays through small openings in their doors, allowed one person at a time to shower outside of their cell, and made their hourly rounds by walking past every cell to check visually on the person inside. When administrators lifted the lockdown, incarcerated people at the DEF quickly realized things were permanently different. Novel correctional practices filtered their bodies through premade categories on State paper forms, which would numerically aggregate the danger each captive represented and therefore where they should be housed. Gone were the days of moving across the compound throughout the day and fraternizing with hundreds of people at any given moment. Prison officials erected new, razor-wire-topped metal fences all over the compound. One fence quickly led to a dozen new metal barriers and the formation of keys to open the metal locks, hinged onto thick gate pipes. Rigid schedules became the norm as people lived out administrative and disciplined routines that governed their bodies, access to materials and social relations, and their movement patterns. Talk of the time before the murders, and life after "the event," covered the grounds like the desert dirt blowing in the wind.

Before the 2001 murders, most correctional officers believed they were under constant threat of violence from incarcerated people, but there was also a sense that control belonged to staff: that carefully selected policies and practices contained and constrained captives' bodies and actions. The murders destroyed this belief and began a new timeline, one beset with

supposedly more knowledge and understanding about the ‘truth’ of the ‘real’ and dangerous world in which incarcerated people and staff existed. Worse yet, the murders signified a correctional affective turn, changing the prison compound from a place of perceived continuous bodily control where each person knew their social rank and purpose, to an unsettling space marked by the need for all forms of captive immobility. In this more fearful setting, prison administrators and staff alike foresaw danger at every turn and sharp objects in every hand, creating threatening caricatures of people imprisoned at the DEF and an ambience of potential violence and total destruction at the behest of captives. Fully situated in a new context, and with the help of new trainings that emphasized the deviant natures of the people living in the prison, most correctional staff concluded that incarcerated people were inherently dangerous with limited potential except for that of physical violence. While captives challenged, ignored, and acquiesced to these “facts,” many staff continued to imagine a terrible future – one in which violent criminals ran amuck, threatening the foundations of human societies and humankind itself. The time had come to ensure that the danger was to be permanently eradicated, and this came in the form of controlling mobility.

In this dissertation, I document how and why mobility in one ‘male’ prison in the American Southwest unsettles incarcerated people and correctional officers’ constructions of what counts as alive and Human. For many captives and workers, physical movement signifies aliveness: meaning that incarceration forces them to question just how alive they are, and where, and if, they fit within naturalized Human hierarchies. Restrictive movement policies manifest what I call “unsettling mobilities” or unexpected movement by inanimate objects that upends bodily senses. Precisely because captives’ own movement is so radically constricted, thereby fundamentally challenging their sense of self, incarceration strips people of the movements

which they intuit as fundamental to being Human. These anxieties are not restricted only to captives; correctional officers also feel as if their physical movement is radically constricted because of their work duties, and they worry that they are thus too similar to incarcerated people. As a result, both captives and correctional officers work to eradicate these challenges to their Human status. COs rely upon racialized and gendered movement restrictions that reinforce enslavement tactics, while incarcerated people trade hygiene products, create art, and try to control the movements of those they consider non-human to generate feelings of physical movement. These feelings lead both correctional officers and incarcerated people to link bodily senses tightly with movement to position themselves and others within scales of animacy and Human. In this prison context, to be Human and alive is to feel a personal sense of physical movement while simultaneously marking oneself as an idealized being that controls the mobility of objectified non-humans. Ultimately, I argue that physical movement constructs the alive Human and that euro-americans often utilize mobility to maintain a colonial project that exterminates through incarceration.

Throughout the dissertation, I distinguish between movement and mobility to make clear the distinction between observable actions and my analytical framework. Utilizing Michell A. Lelièvre and Maureen E. Marshall's scholarship (2015: 440), I consider movement to be "observable acts" where hierarchically situated Subjects and Objects "change in space and time." Mobility should be defined as an "object of study" with a focus on "practices, perceptions, and imaginings" (Lelièvre and Marshall 2015: 7; see also Lefebvre 1991 [1974]). When I use the word 'movement(s)', readers should understand that I am focusing on the actions I observed, the physical processes of change in space and time, and environmental contexts. I employ the term 'mobility' when analyzing how power-laden perspectives about movement informs incarcerated

people and correctional officer's *feelings* about what it means to be alive and Human. The distinction between movement and mobility is subtle, but extremely important. As people live with harsh movement restrictions, they find themselves questioning their sense of aliveness and their Human status. Offering a mobility analysis renders visible these concerns and the nuances of prison life at the Desert Echo Facility.

settler populations in the united states have historically utilized incarceration to create an ideal society free from 'criminals' who threaten essentialized hierarchies. Unfortunately, their natural order of things often comes steeped in bigoted, euro-american assumptions about who should live, where peoples should be housed, how individuals should move, and who and what have access to material and social resources. This imagined society is built upon the incarceration and exclusion of racialized, gendered, classed, sexualized, and disabled peoples who cannot fit into the social fabric because they are often not Human enough, if at all. But the open secret is that most of the incarcerated and excluded were never meant to be Human Subjects, but rather, material Objects to be controlled by the very peoples who created the hierarchies to begin with. Through these actions, settlers imagine an idyllic world filled with beings they call Human – individuals who perpetually demonstrate mastery over themselves, other creatures, and lands. The imagining continues when those atop the order, or close enough to it, pretend that their constructed hierarchies prove that Humans 'like them' have always been superior. The trick, they argue, is to prevent Others from infringing upon and ruining their world – a world that is nothing more than their singular hierarchical construct built upon violent lies. Incarceration remains a key component in the perpetuation of these american falsehoods, lies that dream of conjuring a country where white and heterosexist male supremacy coalesce to form a more perfect union. america, a State with expertise in excluding entire groups of people from

Human and the spaces where Human roams, utilizes incarceration to disappear and exterminate the ‘things’ that its settlers feel shouldn’t exist in the first place. But hierarchies are always troubled, shaky constructions. Like prisons, hierarchies remain dynamic despite punishing restrictions, and people often create novel feelings and relationships that, once made manifest, cannot be fully controlled. But still, for many in america, constructing prisons and the Human category offers the sleepy hope of manifesting dream worlds for themselves, while so many Others have to remain wide awake.

Because the american State currently disappears over two million captives into prisons, more than any other country in the world, I wrote this dissertation as an act of public anthropology. Anthropologists, sociologists, and criminal justice scholars engage prison studies with a wide variety of research goals. Foucauldian theories, particularly disciplinary power, remain the dominant focus in these fields, and, because access is not easy to come by, most research is conducted through facility tours, surveys, and interviews. This dissertation offers an immersive ethnographic perspective. It centers participants’ daily lives in order to analyze how incarcerated people and correctional staff construct what it means to be alive and Human through mobility. By exploring mobility in a prison context, *Sensing Incarceration* challenges common assumptions that incarcerated people lose all control over their movement, demonstrating instead that power operates from multiple perspectives, even in penal settings. This is not to deny the complex asymmetries involved in prison positionalities. My work, however, complicates standard prison scholarship by providing analysis for how and why incarcerated people creatively find ways to feel mobile and reimagine what it means to be Human despite their punishing restrictions. As imprisonment is a political strategy utilized by ruling classes to subjugate, disappear, and destroy marginalized peoples, this dissertation demonstrates that whose

mobility gets marked as dangerous, and who gets to count as alive, become central to understanding what types of people become targets for incarceration and extermination. After all, State systems often center movement, in all its forms – body, migration, imaginary, material – to construct threat, harmony, order. These practices usually Otherize beings deemed inferior, leading to scales of aliveness and categories of Human that legitimate all sorts of violence. Also, because the torture of penal punishment often remains invisible, though prison captives and materials entangle in global economies, I conducted this research to center what it feels like to live and work in a prison and documented the torturous effects of american punishment, demonstrating the necessity for prison abolition.

### **Imprisoned Assumptions**

Prisons and incarcerated people are often rendered invisible, even though the prison-industrial complex involves almost every aspect of social life in the united states. Incarceration tactics often uproot individuals from their communities, painfully alter kinship bonds, plunder neighborhood resources, and profit at the expense of marginalized peoples (Davis 2003; Gilmore 2007). When non-incarcerated people who have little contact with corrections think about prisons, they often imagine places that demonstrate primordial violence, suggesting a version of premodern humanity. Prison invisibility and notions about “primitive” peoples come about precisely because most people have never lived or worked inside penal compounds. For these reasons, and to correct the substantial lacuna in american popular understandings, I conduct research to exemplify what it feels like to be held captive and socially positioned as non-human within the united states. While I do not ever contend that I can fully describe the infinite possibilities of prison life, I emphasize the sensory feelings of everyday corrections to create dynamic portraits of individuals disappeared through penal kidnappings and economic

desperation. I pair sensory foci with mobility to problematize legal apparatuses that uproot and destroy, to make clear the importance of social justice movements that work to create radical alternatives to ‘western’ punishment.

Within popular american imaginations, incarcerated people often situate at the intersection of racialized criminal, degenerate imbecile, and manipulative monster (Wacquant 2001). As caricatures of violent creatures wandering unchecked and perpetually wreaking havoc, the dominant solution for this ‘problem’ became continuous policing and imprisonment (Davis 2003; Harvey 2005). Incarceration practices have historically targeted marginalized peoples and been utilized to prop up white supremacy, heteropatriarchal practices, and capitalism. As a result, darker-skinned peoples, queers, the differently abled, feminine-presenting individuals, and those with access to few economic resources bear the largest burden of imprisonment. As targets of this violence, these individuals and constructed collectives became marked as inherently criminal – some to greater extent than others depending on intersectional positionalities – and beings who needed to be managed, regulated, and controlled. Complicating matters, over the past 25 years, multiple television shows and movies have also portrayed prisons as sites filled with perpetually chaotic creatures who lash out without reason, constructing a version of the savage that is simultaneously ahistorical and a permanent temporal presence (see Ross 1997; Trouillot 2003). This is the version of the incarcerated person that I fear most readers will imagine when they open this dissertation. It is my job to demonstrate the problems with these assumptions and the subtle ways all of us perpetuate this violent imaginary.

Because prisons have become so naturalized for most americans it is imperative that readers understand what they will be encountering. This is not a work designed to titillate with salacious stories about primitive and savage peoples, nor is it a dissertation that should fulfill

racialized desires to understand the inherent character flaws which ‘criminals’ possess. On the other hand, the upcoming chapters should also not be read as an attempt to find a noble savage or to quietly push aside the fact that all kinds of people are capable of performing terrible acts of violence. There will be no stories that emphasize gang affiliation, drug usage, or so-called illicit economies because there has already been plenty of focus on these subjects (e.g., Crewe 2009; Hammil et al. 2017; Skarbeck 2014; Sparks et al. 1996).<sup>i</sup> Centering these perspectives often fulfills colonial desires that *Sensing Incarceration* attempts to avoid. If you are seeking a version of prisons similar to television shows such as *Oz* (1997) or *Orange is the New Black* (2013), this dissertation is not for you. Those fantasies often erase the historical violence that created the capacity for mass incarceration to flourish in a white supremacist society. Prisons exist because of political choices made throughout the entire colonization tenure of what has become known as the United States. They exist on stolen lands and it is no accident that prisons steal and disappear people using similar strategies that European invaders operationalized so long ago. This dissertation is not for people seeking to validate colonial imaginings about some mythical human nature that can explain why so many people are locked up in the purported land of the free.

*Sensing Incarceration* is an attempt to challenge colonialist assumptions about incarcerated people and to demonstrate that imprisonment tortures millions of individuals in hidden and unexpected ways as a result of political choices (see Nichols 2014). I ask that readers embrace their discomfort with their own roles in crime and punishment, as captive and captor, and in enacting freedom and bondage. The forthcoming stories may at times be difficult to read because the analysis entails undermining long-held assumptions about who and what is alive, Human, criminal. There are moments of laughter and joy as well as troubling ideas and actions. This dissertation attempts to demonstrate lighter moments, while not shying away from the



horrific violence that many captives and captors enact. But as Bryan Stevenson (2014) reminds us, no person should be reduced to the worst thing they have ever done, nor should anyone be reduced to their best qualities or the persona they put forward for all to see. Instead, this dissertation attempts to showcase the messiness of everyday prison life, the violence that States can produce, and the beauties and horrors of becoming Human.

### **Knowledge Production and the Shame of Moth**

I have an X-Files tattoo. This may not seem important, but let me explain. My father taught me never to kill moths. From his Indigenous, and maybe to a small extent his Chicano, perspective, killing any moth was an affront to the Moth being itself. For him, Moth represents rebirth and change, and this being spirited all moths throughout the world. So, killing an individual moth was killing Moth. I hope this makes sense because I can't describe it any other way. Moth is special. Not like Turtle, but special nonetheless. As a child, I always watched moths fly around our home seeking light as I observed their fragile wings. I never wanted to be the one who shooed moths out of the house for fear of damaging or killing them in attempting to get them to safety.

But when I was eight years old and playing outside, I noticed a small, brown thing hanging from a leaf. I didn't know what it was and was fascinated by it. I thought about picking it, like the blackberries that grew in the woods by our house, but it looked like it had a hard exterior and I wondered if touching it could hurt me. So instead, I went inside, grabbed a pair of scissors, and cut the thing in half. Instantly, it began spewing and twisting as if in agony, and I immediately knew what I had done. It was a cocoon of a living being, now in the process of dying because of my act. I knew that I had taken something that didn't belong to me and had probably destroyed Moth without meaning to. In my search for understanding and knowledge, I

destroyed the very being I was fascinated by. With shame, I threw the scissors in the woods and hid my face when my mother kept wondering aloud where our scissors had disappeared to.

Five years later, on an episode of *The X-Files*, I watched as Dana Scully lay dying in a hospital bed as her mother narrated a story about the character's childhood. A young Scully had gone shooting with her brothers and targeted a snake for their killing. But as they continued to shoot, Scully realized that the snake was dying and, when it finally did, through tears she realized she had taken something that didn't belong to her, not understanding the consequences of her actions until it was too late. Watching this brought up the shame of destroying Moth, and I cried watching that moment. I also made the decision that I would never destroy anything in search of knowledge, ever again. I don't know if that is a promise that can ever be kept, but I have since tried my hardest to keep true to those words. I got my X-Files tattoo before leaving for fieldwork and every time I was in the prison facing tough decisions about how much I needed to know and how I should go about obtaining that information, I looked at that tattoo and felt the shame of Moth.

### **Delicate Fieldwork**

Conducting ethnographic research in prisons brings forth many concerns about participants' anonymity and safety. Incarcerated people already live as disappeared peoples with little oversight for how they are treated, and correctional officers constantly worry about how they are perceived and portrayed, often as sadistic enslavers who get pleasure from holding people captive. Also, attaining access to conduct fieldwork at the Desert Echo Facility required many signed forms, State and local corrections approvals, and continual promises that this work would not include real names or easily identifiable personal creations. As a result, I have come up with different ways of keeping these promises, and actively demonstrating the utmost care for

all participant's personal safety and emotional health, while also showing what it feels like to live and work at the DEF. It is for these reasons that *Sensing Incarceration* is written a bit differently from other texts.

Most of the people I conducted research with asked to be written about only as pseudonymized portraits, and questioned how I would make sure their words and actions could not be traced back to them. Others requested that they be openly identified, and only agreed to pseudonyms after understanding that anonymity depended on everyone. If one incarcerated person or correctional officer used their real information, everyone could be identified with a simple search. Even so, some participants demanded that I identify them or not be allowed to write about them at all. I chose the latter option because the vast majority of people asked that I protect their identities.

In order to provide some anonymity and to prevent people on the DEF compound from easily identifying participants, I create individuals out of two separate people who have similar backgrounds and prison narratives. I developed these portraits for each individual's protection, while trying to keep true to both the spirits of who all the participants are, and what each person revealed of themselves throughout the fieldwork tenure (see Marcus and Fischer 1986, 1999; Saunders et al. 2015). Understandably this can cause concern about the validity of the analysis in *Sensing Incarceration*, because one can wonder how 'real' or 'truthful' the representations of people are. But this is true of all anthropological writing. Everything is filtered through one or multiple authors with diverse positionalities that influence who gets written about and how all 'characters' are portrayed. The act of creating individuals from multiple people is necessary for this type of research.

I was given unprecedented access inside a State prison. I was alone with incarcerated people in their cells, units, and work spaces. I stayed with them as they travelled across the compound. I listened to their life stories, jokes, and concerns, and read their judicial files. I also worked with COs, though never doing their actual labor, observing job duties, listening as they spoke about their lives, and performing semi-structured interviews. Because so many people gave so much of their time and themselves, it is my duty to respect their concerns for anonymity and to go as far as I can to make sure their words and actions do not create blowback or make their lives less safe. The quotes from ‘individuals’ are also pieced together from two separate people as a means to include captives’ and workers’ words, but without attributing them to one person. And because prison workers could confiscate my materials at any time, and keep them, I did not write direct quotes unless they were short and could not be attributed to anyone. I did move across the compound with bright yellow, green, and red notebooks as a reminder that I was always ‘taking notes’ in some form or fashion, but most of these notes were in scratch form to protect identities in case my materials were taken away. I wrote most of my fieldnotes in my car after I had driven off prison property, and I left all detailed notes in my apartment. When actual quotation marks appear, these are word-for-word quotes that I was able to notate. The large block quotes are always pieced together from two people who make up the ‘individual’ identity. While these remarks cannot fully be verified as exact quotes because I wrote them based on scratch notes after I left the prison, they are as close as possible to the original words that captives and workers provided. I was also not allowed to record conversations – nor did I want to – because the dangers of having recordings confiscated by prison administrators were not worth the risks to the people who graciously allowed me into their worlds. Part of protecting participants requires constructing individuals and their words in ways that feel real to readers and

to people who live and work at the DEF. I only hope I have done enough in ensuring anonymity as people come to know many participants in this study.

I also do not use the real name of the prison, nor do I name the state in which it is located. I came up with the name Desert Echo Facility because it denotes a physical environment, a sensory process, and a government compound. In English, the acronym also flows easily because of its alphabetical arrangement. I try not to provide too many details about its exact location, including not describing much information about how the land was purchased, how large the property is (other than inside the prison perimeter), the exact year the compound was built, and how close it is to cities and landmarks. I do this not to ignore history, but to acknowledge that this is not essential information for readers. Instead, I focus on the prison itself, captives, and workers and situate all of these contexts within historical processes that continue to influence multiple forms of relationships.

As a representational choice, I do not capitalize america, united states, europe, western, and euro-american because I take the position that invaders don't deserve to be recognized with this respectful action. Incarceration on this land exists as the dominant form of punishment because of the continuous genocidal and colonizing practices of individuals and collectives who should not be allowed to lay claim to lands they stole and plundered. Providing them with a grammatical title is something I'm not willing to do. I still use the names as a shorthand for readers, but I want to make clear that, for many, 'america' exists only in the imaginations of peoples so immersed in white supremacy that they cannot dream different worlds, nor can they come to terms or recognize how 'america' was created. Like prisons, the united states was and is built through the genocide of Indigenous peoples and through the enslavement of African peoples. Similarly, european invaders, and their settling offspring, will not be given the benefit

of the doubt in this dissertation. They won't even be given a capital letter. The only exception to this rule is when these words are used in quotation and for individuals' personal identities. If someone wants to claim an identity that utilizes america, I capitalize it out of respect to the participant, for example: Mexican-American, Native American, etc. Finally, I use the term euro-american as a shorthand for settlers of european ancestry. While some readers may feel this is a broad category, I utilize this designation because incarceration is a product of european ideologies and practices which settlers expanded upon once they colonized what they called the 'new world.' euro-american is meant to be a bit broad to show that naturalized assumptions about incarceration run deep and stretch wide, but also to demonstrate that while there is now enough blame to go around, euro-american settlers remain directly responsible for the continuation of incarceration in the united states.

Another writing choice represents the ethnographic narratives from the perspective of research participants. Every word in these vignettes was constructed from captives' and workers' personal statements, their observations, the feelings they voiced, and my observations. Because most people have never lived or worked inside a prison, this form of writing is meant to help readers understand what it feels like to be an incarcerated person or correctional officer. The narratives should provide readers with a strong foundation for imagining another person's life even though they have not met, and will most likely never meet, any of these individuals. Some readers may have concerns about how I wrote these sections, making claims that it lacks objectivity or that they cannot provide the whole perspective. But ethnography is always partial because it is always authored (Abu-Lughod 1991; Behar 1996; Binte-Farid 2018; Rosaldo 1989 [1993]). Incarcerated people and correctional officers did not write this dissertation; I did. This is an important fact to remember. I do my best to describe how people do things, how they feel, and

what they imagine. But I am not them, and I don't pretend to be. This writing choice is only meant as a helpful guide for readers who don't yet understand what incarceration really means.

Like most researchers, I made a lot of mistakes during fieldwork and held a number of problematic assumptions about all types of people and things that live and work inside prisons, which greatly affected how I wrote this dissertation. I try to be as honest as possible about these issues by emphasizing my ignorance and the problems that arose from them. I purposefully include these parts of myself to highlight naturalized prejudices. I know that every person is more than their mistakes, but it's important to acknowledge how damaging unquestioned beliefs can be. There are multiple points throughout this dissertation where I use myself as a stand-in for readers' ignorance, a word I use with the kindest possible intention. No one knows what they don't know, and at times, this not-knowing can provide solace from the pain and shame that knowing can cause. I hope this dissertation can make it a little harder for readers to use the "I don't know" excuse when it comes to the torture that imprisonment creates, while also helping people to understand their own complicity in mass incarceration and its punitive, historical predecessors. The fact that prisons have become so naturalized in our societies, despite the continuous damage they produce, is a testament to the ignorance of our own destructive actions. Ignorance is a form of knowledge production and, in this way, we are all children holding scissors, taking what does not belong to us.

### **Foundational Literature**

While every chapter contains a literature review pertinent to the central theories and arguments to that specific section, it is important to have some basic understanding of the foundational scholarship about mobility and confinement, sensory anthropology, space and social exclusion, and contemporary prison studies.

Historically, the scholarship on confinement and mobility have informed each other, even as many researchers have framed these two practices as separate concepts. Scholars who focus on confinement have largely concentrated on the ways in which restricted movement constrains interpersonal relations and constitutes normative models of sociality that reify existing power regimes (Foucault 1977; Goffman 1961; Rhodes 2004). Using notions of the panopticon (Bentham 1791, 2008), these scholars centered their research within institutions like prisons, asylums, and concentration camps in order to demonstrate how state officials employed disciplinary techniques within penal and genocidal compounds (Casella 2007; Reed 2003; Starn 1986; Sykes 1958). Current research on confinement makes clear that administrators manage emotional relationships and intimacy formation within carceral institutions (Kunzel 2008; Lindahl 2011), even as many have moved their theoretical frameworks outside of "total institutions" in order to demonstrate the historical and contemporary links between acts of physical and social confinement, and new constructions of sociality and State violence (Alexander 2010; Caldeira 2000; Chiang 2018; Davis 2003; Garcia 2008; Gerard and Pickering 2012; Netz 2004; Wacquant 2001).

Since the late 1970s, mobility research has interrogated the presupposition that physical and social movement is inherently a positive phenomenon (Casmir and Rao 1992). Focusing on cultural ideals of mobility, scholars argue that western societies have historically been suspicious of unregulated movement (Cresswell 2006; Deleuze and Guittari 1987; Rosaldo 1988) and that naturalized mobility assumptions may depend upon feelings of agency about particular migrations and bodily movements (Adey 2006). Contemporary mobility studies highlight the dynamism of mobility, rather than spatial and temporal borders (Freund 2001; Glick-Schiller and Salazar 2013; Lean 2012; Urry 2007), and considers its role in constructing conceptions of the



inferior Other (Salazar 2011). Scholars also describe how life may be considered a “meshwork” of interconnected webs of movement that demonstrate the entanglements and creations of mobility (Ingold 2011; Stewart 2005; Stoller 1989), and make evident how social processes that create mobility can also confine and exclude (Tsing 2005). This dissertation expands upon literatures of confinement and mobility to materialize both practices and understand how they inform the sensory in an american prison.

When a prison guard walks down a DEF corridor, their keys echo figuratively and literally, reminding incarcerated people of the power structures in which they live. Because this project explores the linkage between mobility and bodily senses, I engage literatures on sensory anthropology. Historically, two methodological approaches have defined sensory anthropology: (1) descriptive ethnographic representations of sensory information (Desjarlais 1992; Jackson 1983; Stoller 1989; Taussig 1993), and (2) cross-cultural comparisons of sensory case-studies (Classen 1997; Guerts 2003; Howes 1991). However, sensory theory within anthropological scholarship often created and reinforced racist stereotypes and privileged euro-american perceptions about bodily senses (Howes 2003; Edwards 2006). Within these practices, researchers claimed that euro-american peoples were dominated by the mind while all other peoples were slaves to their bodily senses (Richards 1998; Stewart 2005). Despite these problems, many researchers continued to focus on the importance of sensory practices, arguing that touch and media helped to construct sociality and that sensory assumptions were central to analyses of myth (Levi-Strauss 1964; McLuhan 1962; Mead 1935). During the 1980s, anthropology of the senses began to focus on how people construct meaning and sociality through their sensory practices (Herzfeld 2001; Jackson 1983; Seeger 1981; Sullivan 1986). Specifically, scholars have focused on how different peoples create social worlds based upon

auditory habits (Boivin et. al. 2007; Bull and Beck 2003; Corbin 2003; Feld 1982), how cultural memories are embedded in smells and tastes (Seremetakis 1994; Stoller 1997) how material vibrations generate movements (Bissel 2009, 2010) and how sensory foci can marginalize, hierarchize, and create categories of Others (Ingold 2000; Marks 2000). Tracing how sensory practices create affective relations (Hamilakis 2014), this dissertation expands upon this literature by focusing on how incarcerated people generate feelings of movement that lay claim to scales of aliveness and Human-making, through the interlinkage of bodily senses and everyday materials.

While incarcerated people utilize sensory practices as powerful acts that assert their aliveness and to construct the Human, they do so within architectural structures that often manifest spaces of isolation. Since Goffman's seminal work on stigma (1963), scholars who focus on social exclusion have concentrated on marginalized peoples in order to analyze structural violence and inequality, highlighting how social categories can create and disrupt intersubjectivity (Bourgois 1996; Holmes 2013; Phillips 2012; Rosaldo 1989; Scheper-Hughes 1992). However, researchers have also argued that within practices of social exclusion, oppressed people can exert power in ways that shape the larger society (Gaunt 2006) and form communities in places imagined to be hostile (Gray 2009), demonstrating how lived spaces can be produced through diverse meaning-making actions. Because space always embodies multiple meanings (Bourdieu 1977; Lefebvre 1991; Moore 1986), people often construct and produce space by negotiating and contesting asymmetrical power dynamics (Low 2011). Working within Merleau-Ponty's (1962) phenomenological framework, researchers have argued that: habitual bodily practices create time-space routines that give meaning to places (Harvey 1973; Seamon 1980); different bodily directions, velocities, and temporalities intersect with a multitude of

mobile elements in order to create embodied space as a practiced place (De Certeau 1984); and that people create mobile spatio-temporal fields that stretch from an individual's body throughout many different locales, constituting social relations and processes of exclusion (Low 2003; Munn 1990). Essentially, there has been an academic move to place a sense of dynamism within spatial conceptions, or to turn space into movement itself (Giddens 1990; Munn 1996).

Because I concentrate on how mobility, bodily senses, and incarceration informs scales of aliveness and Human-making, it is important to include a brief review of current prison scholarship. Following Loic Wacquant's (2002) call for conducting more research inside carceral institutions with a focus outside of the United States, and Lorna Rhodes (2001) foundational review of anthropological imprisonment literatures, social science scholarship has recently begun to challenge long-held assumptions about incarcerated people and their everyday lives. While Black Feminist and Womynist scholars have long argued for these same foci (see Collins 2012; Crenshaw 1991, 2017; Davis 1983, 2003; James 1996; Shakur 2001), anthropology has only recently begun to center prison research. Historically, American prison ethnographies have been hindered by lack of access, funding, and interest, leading anthropologists (and sociologists) to focus mostly on European and South and Central American contexts. In doing so, these scholars delved into the workings of carceral institutions and prison expansionism (Beckett and Western 2001; Feely and Simon 1992; Garland 2001; Harcourt 2011; Simon 2007; Wacquant 2008, 2009; Western 2006), often attempting to challenge the notion of a unified and centralized State (Bennett et al. 2008; Bourdieu 1994 [1998]; Carrabine 2004; Cheliotis 2006; Crawley 2004; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Liebling and Arnold 2004; Lipsky 1980). Others focused on how administrators constructed rationales for prison policies such as risk management, rehabilitation, psychological treatment, individual responsibility, and retribution (Bryan 2007; Carlen and

Tombs 2006; Crewe 2009; Gillespie 2008; Kendal and Pollack 2003; Haney 2010; Hanna-Moffat 2001; Rhodes 2004; Whitman 2003). These arguments have often been shown as normalizing tactics that naturalize incarceration as a necessary form of punishment built on the falsehood that prisons keep individuals safe (Cunha 2014).<sup>ii</sup> Prisons have also been shown to be porous institutions that impact families, economies, and land usage rather than places existing outside of society (Braman 2004; Clear 2007; Cunha 2008; Mills and Codd 2007; Pandovani 2013; Travis and Waul 2003), while also demonstrating that minoritized peoples often bear harsher burdens of the carceral reach through financial penalties, policing strategies, and resource theft (Barbosa 2006; Biondi 2010; Comfort 2008; Cunha and Granja 2014; Gilmore 2007; Wacquant 2013). This scholarship greatly informs *Sensing Incarceration*, even as I expand upon these literatures by offering an ethnographic portrait of everyday life for dozens of incarcerated people and correctional officers in an american prison.

### **Architectures at the DEF**

In the early 1980s, local construction crew members, supplied with State funding, built the Desert Echo Facility (DEF) in the american Southwest approximately 14 miles outside of the nearest city center and near the county fairgrounds. Because of this location, incarcerated people can sometimes hear music playing, animals herding, and crowds swaying on carnival rides and high-fructose corn syrup, while the former sit in their 8-by-12-foot cells. Originally designed as a minimum-security prison to hold 300 individuals, the DEF quickly expanded to include high-security housing as a result of the legislated collapse of social welfare programs and continual racially and economically punitive government policies such as the War on Drugs and Broken Windows policing (Harvey 2005). Today, the facility contains 1,000 incarcerated people and employs approximately 450 workers, including 175 correctional officers. The captives include

predominantly Hispanic, Mexican American, Latino, and Chicano peoples (approximately 65 percent) followed by Caucasians (approximately 15 percent). Indigenous, Indian Americans, and Native Americans make up approximately 10 percent of the overall population, with the approximate percentage of African American and Black peoples being around eight percent. The remaining populations, which the State classifies as Other, includes Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and individuals with two or more races. Overall, captives are majority brown, bilingual English and Spanish speakers, with access to few economic resources. Correctional officers follow a similar demographic pattern. Most COs identify as Mexican American, Hispanic, Chicano, and Latino (approximately 80 percent). Caucasians make up approximately 15 percent of the CO workforce followed by African Americans (approximately three percent), with the remaining 2 percent classified as Other (including Asian and Indigenous peoples). COs are also overwhelmingly brown, bilingual English and Spanish speakers, and individuals with access to few economic resources.

The prison sits on a large piece of land purchased from the federal government at a cheaper than average rate. State administrators applied to buy the plot specifically for the purposes of building a prison. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) officials approved the transaction, advising that a prison must be constructed on the property or risk paying full price for the land. Some 30 years later, I spoke to a BLM employee in the town near the prison, who explained that if the State had built a school or community center, the price would have tripled or quadrupled. Apparently, land is given from the American government at lower costs as long as it holds people captive. Once used for animal herding and open grazing, the land where State officials built the DEF now contains metal and electric fences, mechanized doors, chains that

outline borders and shackle people, guns, tasers, gas bombs, batons, barbed wire, correctional staff, and incarcerated people. The land may have been inexpensive but it came at a large price.

The prison architects who constructed the DEF modeled the facility after the campus design – compounds that consist of freestanding buildings with large open spaces between the concrete structures – but created the internal living and working quarters (known as Units) on semi-circular Benthamite panopticon principles. Visual surveillance is a strong component of the supervisory and disciplinary tactics utilized at this facility, demonstrated by the large number of watchtowers where correctional officers observe prison staff and incarcerated people’s movements, and by the fact that the internal structure of every prison unit clusters around a surveillance center two stories high that faces every cell, 16 in total, within the structure. From the perspective of many prison scholars who see pictures of these types of prison facilities, but never actually step inside one, vision appears to be the dominant sensory concern.<sup>iii</sup> But the architectural design of the DEF should not be reduced solely to the visual. Penal space can often be structured to impart environmentally particular feelings for specific punishments (Casella 2012; Vaughn 2011). This dissertation aims to contribute to the growing scholarship that challenges ocularcentrism while providing readers with a sensory portrait of what it feels like to live and work inside this prison.

Architects designed the DEF to keep order inside and outside the prison, but after the 2001 murders, for many workers it appeared that captives wielded more control than COs. As a result, State legislators and administrators instituted specific housing guidelines for new arrivals focusing on adjudicated crimes, imprisonment length, and supposed gang affiliation, guidelines that morphed into the current policies. There are currently four security-levels that house incarcerated people at the DEF, including Levels II, III, IV, and VI.<sup>iv</sup> The Level II section of the

prison is the lowest security ranking. Here, administrators allow all incarcerated people to walk around the inside of the facility at certain times, but captives must return to their bunks for a mandatory body count six times throughout the day. The Level II facility is structured in a way that forces all individuals inside the building to acknowledge the security apparatus at all times. All employees, visitors, and incarcerated peoples must wait at the front entrance until security staff release the mechanical locks on the door from a central security location. Upon entering the facility, all must walk through a metal detector and place an identification card into a small opening in the wall. The living quarters are divided into four housing units that each hold approximately 46 people. This building is fully surrounded by a large fence with barbed wire on top of the entire structure. The individuals who reside in this facility are all set to be released from prison within the next four years. I did not conduct research at the Level II facility, but individuals residing in this building can be transferred into the higher security facility where I conducted fieldwork, which sits approximately 200 yards away from this building.

The higher-security prison houses people at Levels III, IV, and VI. Like the minimum-security building, all must wait at a door until a correctional officer allows you to enter, where metal detectors await your arrival and COs ask about possible contraband on your person. Prohibited items include recording devices, cameras, cell phones, glass containers, non-plastic silverware, narcotics, and anything considered a weapon. Correctional officers may move a wand over visitors' bodies to ensure that nothing metallic is brought inside the facility and they may also rifle through workers' and visitors' bags. Once past this checkpoint, everyone must wait at another security center, known as B Control, and then walk through two more mechanized doors that lead to a 150-foot corridor and locked gate. Once allowed to enter into this section, individuals now have a panoramic view of the entire facility. On the left and right of this

entrance you can see towering housing units for Level IV incarcerated peoples. There is also one unit where Level VI captives reside. Individuals housed in Level III units are placed in buildings directly in front of this entrance, approximately 500 feet away. The Administration, Medical, Chapel, Gym, Dining (known as Chow Hall), and Education buildings are stationed in a quad, all within approximately 80 yards of each other. There are also large amounts of barbed-wire atop cyclone-style fences lining the border of the prison, surrounding every housing unit, and atop every building alongside dozens of locked gates.

The Level system directly correlates to housing priorities at the Desert Echo Facility. All incarcerated people reside in Units where a total of 46 people live, alone, in 8-by-12-foot cells. Inside these units, individuals are stratified into two tiers, top and bottom, and, depending on the security level, they are often not allowed outside of their cells with more than seven people and do not move to the rec yards or the gym altogether. From both tiers of the unit, captives face the security center where COs could watch them for the majority of their day. The security center is an impressive sight from the perspective of anyone sitting in these units: a display of power and surveillance enshrined in the room, and a constant reminder of the power of the prison system itself. Individuals marked with Level III housing are allowed to be outside of their cell for most of their day, unless administrators call for a lockdown or after 8 PM, with all 16 unit-mates. They are also allowed to walk to their jobs across the compound, attend religious services, and go to Education classes. Level IV captives live alone in their cells for upwards of 20 hours a day and are only allowed out of their cells with their tier mates for four hours daily. Level VI captives live alone in their cells for 23 hours a day and are allowed outside in a one-person cage for one hour of recreation time.



## **Fieldwork Methods**

To collect data and formulate my dissertation arguments, I conducted participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and mapping of movement at the Level III, IV, and VI units.

Performing these methods in a prison environment came with a number of benefits and drawbacks that I will discuss throughout this section. It is important to note that my methodology changed dramatically throughout fieldwork as I learned from participants and realized what was possible in this particular bureaucratic institution. I also centered mobility as a structural and analytical concept, and not just a physical movement or individual action.

### **Participant Observation**

I struggled with calling the research I conducted at the DEF participant observation because I worried that I could never really participate in research as an incarcerated person or CO. I was never in any real danger of becoming imprisoned. I did not live on the compound (in fact, I spent an average of 8-12 hours a day at the DEF and then left for the comfort of my apartment). I never stayed in a cell for more than one day. And I was not held in bondage by the State. But I remembered what I learned in an Ethnographic Methods class, taught by Ira Bashkow in 2014, about the limitations of participant observation: everything is partial and to pretend that anyone can ever be completely immersed in a new context where they understand everything about everyone and everything is foolhardy. That's not anthropology – it's fantasy. And I spent thousands of hours inside the DEF, upwards of 3,800, with a total of 74 incarcerated people and 41 correctional officer participants over the course of 12 months. I stayed with many captives as long as I could, and as long as they allowed in their cells, classrooms, and workspaces. I moved with them (sometimes alone but often with multiple people) throughout the units, across the compound, to their visits, and through bureaucratic processes that crafted movement policies and

practices in the facility. I observed everyday lives, relationship formation and termination, movement patterns, food habits, creative endeavors, lockdowns, conversations, administrator and captive discipline, fights and negotiations, media programming, work habits, architectural structures, sensory practices, violence, rituals, clothing, confining and mobile materials, and important life events. With COs I observed everything that I did with captives, but added their work practices on and off the compound, their home life, and administrative meetings specific to their work duties. I performed these actions to try and understand how participants construct mobility and how and why it manifests, how and when people do or do not move and at what speeds, how and why materials that move between people and spaces – including common hygiene products and artistic creations – create feelings of personal movement and sensory practices, or vice versa, and how bodily senses and mobility interlink. I followed people and materials all over the compound to understand how mobility, bodily senses, animacy, and Human inform one another through these participatory methods. But there will be no stories similar to Clifford Geertz's (2005) Balinese cockfight. I was never a captive or CO, "one of them," nor do I pretend that I was.

With permission from participants and the State Corrections Department, and through constant negotiations with prison staff, I stayed inside incarcerated people's cells and units to focus on how they occupied their time throughout the day. I scrutinized their physical creations in order to understand how mobility manifested through materials, and how and why these creations connect to the way many people sense their worlds. I documented which materials became associated with particular senses, such as hygiene products, sugar, and cloth. I followed the participants and the materials they passed along to other captives in order to trace how mobility and sensory practices materialized. I also moved with participants throughout daily

activities, including moving through the tower/facility to go to recreational time outside of their building, following individuals throughout work routines, and moving with them throughout educational and therapeutic programming. With correctional officers, I followed them throughout their work routines, sat with them as they observed captives, went to some of their homes, and observed their training practices. This provided a foundation to understanding their movement routines while also allowing me to map personal, collective, and material movement and sensory patterns. I also followed particular materials, such as paper, hygiene items, and artistic creations throughout the facilities to understand how embodied materials can create feelings of movement though captives often remain locked in their cell.

### *Semi-structured Interviewing*

I interviewed a total of 150 incarcerated people and prison staff, often alone but sometimes with others present. Utilizing participant observation methodologies before I conducted interviews allowed me to build rapport with many participants, and I followed the interviewee's lead when interviewing (Briggs 1986; Jackson 1987). I began by asking about all participants' life histories and what their average day was like. These questions allowed participants to speak as freely as they wanted and it allowed individuals to engage with topics of their interest. I usually spoke with incarcerated people as we sat in their cells or moved across the compound, during their work shifts and rec or gym time. I also asked participants about mobility, confinement, their dreams, what it feels like to live in prison, how they would describe themselves and other captives, what relationships were important to them, how they maintained and ended relationships, what materials they preferred and which ones were important to them, how they viewed COs and other staff, spaces in the prison that felt safe (if any) or dangerous and why, how the architecture of the prison made them feel, if and how their bodies had changed

during imprisonment, what it means to be Human or to be alive, and any other questions pertinent to individual conversations. Based on topics suggested to me by incarcerated people themselves, these questions were designed to illuminate connections between mobility and sensory practices by focusing on participants' ideas and perceptions about what it feels like to live through the corrections systems in the united states. I conducted follow-up interviews throughout fieldwork to see if individuals answered differently or provided new information.

In addition to interviewing incarcerated people, I asked questions of and listened to correctional officers in order to understand their perceptions of themselves and captives and what it felt like to work in a prison. This method also allowed me to ascertain which materials they knew moved throughout the facility and at what speeds, which are preferred by incarcerated people and the items that COs worry about (and do not). I also asked about material confiscations, relationships between incarcerated people and their relationships with staff, and if and how different scales of confinement produce particular material and social relations. Similar to interviews with captives, I began by asking COs about their life histories and everyday life before asking specific questions. This method also allowed me to adjust questions depending on the context and to explore nuanced perspectives depending upon individual conversations. I also asked COs about their concerns of working in prison, what they wished non-imprisoned peoples and workers understood about their labor, and how they feel about regulating captives' movements throughout their day. Because my project focuses largely on men living through incarceration, I sought out female COs and captives and relational kin in order to garner different gendered perspectives. As with interviewing captives, I found that answers changed over time, and previous scholars have argued that many people living through united states corrections systems may seek to hide aspects of their lives out of fear of judgment and negative

consequences (Garfinkel 1956; Goffman 1963; Schlosser 2008). To ensure that I received a spectrum of answers, I re-interviewed individuals throughout the tenure of my fieldwork and followed-up on these interviews using participant observation methodologies.

### *Mapping of Mobility, Relations, and Sensory Materials*

I originally planned to ask incarcerated participants to draw maps of their personal movement, the prison, the kinds of social relations in which they participate, and the sensory materials that move between captives. I quickly ended this method because I learned that if incarcerated people drew maps of anything at the DEF, they could be charged with creating escape paraphernalia and have nine years added to their sentence. I also learned that if I drew maps, I could be charged with aiding captives with escape and subject to legal repercussions. Instead, I asked people to explain what a map might look like and tried to recreate their images through writing. I also followed-up with interviews and participant observation to ensure that I received first-hand accounts of participants' perspectives about mobility, sensory practices, and what it means to be alive and Human, rather than relying solely on my own ideas about how and where participants move, the sensory materials involved in movement, and their sociality. I also followed materials around the prison – such as artistic creations, hygiene products, and small food items – and documented them in my notes when I was off prison grounds. Utilizing this method allowed for tacit knowledge to come forth in physical form, while also allowing for creations to be analyzed at a later date. Within this process, I documented the links between circulated materials, movement patterns, and sensory practices.

The field notes I created and participants' artwork were coded based upon themes that emerged after careful examination of the data; such themes included 'animacy', 'Human', 'gender', 'sexuality', and 'violence'. I utilized analytical notes throughout the coding process in

order to continually evaluate data, to complicate central arguments, and to illuminate further questions and ideas in regards to participants' movements. I also encoded data based upon participants' length of incarceration, severity of confinement, access to material and social relations, personal movements, architectural sensory patterns, and sensory practices. These processes ensured that mobility surfaced while also tracing the construction of animacy and human hierarchies. Specifically, I analyzed the relationships between mobility and the ways in which people interact with each other and the structures that encompass their lives by detailing the historical contexts of incarceration, mobility, and bodily senses. The combination of these methods and my analysis produced detailed ethnographic data that materialize how participants sense incarceration in their daily lives, demonstrating how and why captives and COs creatively upend their incarceration, reassert gender hierarchies, and interlink mobility when constructing what it means to be alive and Human.

### **Chapter Descriptions**

I placed the dissertation's chapters in this specific order to help readers understand how incarcerated people and correctional staff construct the category of Human and scales of aliveness through mobility. In chapter two, "Mobility Matters: Unsettling Punishment at the Desert Echo Facility," I argue that the DEF creates unsettling mobilities that torture incarcerated people in often invisible ways, such as the experience of moving walls and vibrating paper. I define 'unsettling mobility' as unexpected movement by inanimate objects that upends bodily senses, and disrupts naturalized Subject/Object and Life/Non-Life binaries. As DEF captives live in worlds of violent displacement and incarceration, their bodies become sensitive to the movement and vibrations of Subjects and Objects around them. Operationalized unsettling mobilities at the DEF permeate everyday life, resulting in incarcerated people feeling as if

‘inanimate’ materials are alive, while DEF captives themselves are not. Rather than homogenized, easily distinguished movement-practices, I assert that captives’ and correctional officers’ movements enmesh with each other in numerous ways that challenge current conceptions of what it means to be mobile or confined. An ethnographic mobility analysis from the perspectives of DEF incarcerated people also demonstrates that, although many imagine prisons to be places of social and material restriction, prisons exist simultaneously as spaces where specific relations become amplified during everyday correctional operations. Following repeated requests from the men and trans women held captive at the DEF, I here attempt to make readers feel their movements in order to challenge rigid preconceptions about correctional life.

In chapter three, “Masculine Hysteria: Dirty Work and Gendered Touch,” I describe the gendered concerns of numerous correctional officers about what it feels like to hold people captive. I argue that correctional movement restrictions at the DEF demonstrate staff’s hatred of women and the desire to control gender. I provide evidence that DEF correctional officers feel tainted by the work they perform because their bodies are the sites of mobility controls. They collect and analyze mobility data through sight, sound, and touch, and in so doing, find themselves physically and socially “too close” to their captives. Attempting to convince themselves that they are distinct from the people they oversee, they create affective caricatures of incarcerated people and correctional workers. Male correctional officers believe that captives, as beings hierarchically similar to women, must be punished through restricting their movements. As this occurs, COs begin to worry that their own movement is also controlled within the prison, threatening their masculinity. Male COs then emphasize masculinized mobility controls to administer prison policies, in attempts to exert their manhood over feminized populations. As men working in the prison utilize these gendered constructions in their daily work, they place all

incarcerated people hierarchically beneath them and on the same level as women. Most DEF captives identify as men, so, from many COs' perspectives, this action serves to further punish incarcerated men by feminizing them while simultaneously buttressing COs' fragile masculinities. This hatred of women informs how staff enact mobility controls, demonstrating the belief that to punish a man, you must treat him as a woman.

In chapter four, "Killing With Impunity," I examine how correctional officers control incarcerated people's physical movements in ways that disrupt rigid timetables and unsettle asymmetrical power dynamics within the prison compound, in order to demonstrate that COs utilize mobility to assert their power to kill. In continuously upending the prison timetable, staff undermine their argument that scheduled living equates to safety, and they display feelings of discomfort with the work they perform. I then connect these practices to COs' desires to be viewed as law enforcement agents. Many COs speak about their desire to be given the same benefits that police officers receive in many American contexts, and they actively perform trainings where they rush into units, cuff captives, and hold weapons ready to engage in further violence. I argue that COs demand to be perceived as law enforcement because they believe that the latter state agents have been given the right to kill with impunity. Many DEF correctional officers feel as if they must perform gendered labor that gifts captives with the bare necessities to maintain a base level of life, when their own duty should be to kill. COs then turn to the one thing they believe solves this problem: Mobility. They take control of movement to assert themselves as more alive than those they oversee, marking themselves hierarchically distinct from incarcerated people and placing their captives closer to death. In so doing, they situate themselves as State agents who take life instead of giving it. In controlling movement, they obtain the power to kill.



In chapter five, “Moving Scents and Controlling Animacy” I demonstrate that DEF COs and incarcerated people pair mobility with smell to place themselves and others within animacy categories. Many correctional officers use smell to create taphonomic death processes to situate captives as dead and decomposing things. For some, these smells become so powerful that they cannot wash it off their bodies even after they leave the prison, so they attempt to eradicate and contain the incarcerated stench by relying upon stringent mobility controls. Because mobility is tightly linked with animacy at the DEF, COs feel they must do the maintenance work of ensuring that less alive/dead things don’t move, including their smells. In doing so, they construct a blurry divide – hazy but distinct – between alive Subjects and not-alive Objects on the compound, which placates their troubled mobility and sensory assumptions. I then show how many incarcerated people rely upon smell to feel alive and mobile even though they remain in their small cells. Many captives use and share everyday hygiene objects and in doing so, create feelings of movement through the scents borne of these synesthetic objects and themselves. Through these practices, they form communities in a place designed to disappear, divide, and establish hierarchies between themselves and individuals whom they deem to be non-human. As they create these communities and generate movement, they upend their confinement, disrupt correctional assumptions, and reconstruct animacy and Human hierarchies.

In chapter six, “Becoming Human,” I concentrate on how many incarcerated people construct ‘Human’ by violently restricting physical movements of those they consider less than or non-human. Incarcerated men and women perform these actions through: physical attacks and intimidations; utilizing paper to imagine non-human captives as abstract crime; and controlling access to material and social relations. These actions, and the scales of humanness they create, link physical movement with the Human that have unintended consequences for everyone on the

compound. Furthermore, because physical movement often signifies aliveness, I demonstrate that mobility remains a central concern for who gets targeted for incarceration and extermination. I examine how many captives write letters, create poetry, produce artwork, and share everyday materials to construct and perform Human. Through these actions, incarcerated men and women create an individual sense of Human and immobilize temporality to place themselves and Others hierarchically within animacy and Human categories. These men and women demonstrate that to be Human at the DEF is inextricably linked with the power to control, but also that not everyone agrees as to how hierarchy should be constructed. I argue that how captives create the Human category, often fraught with conflicts and negotiations, produces many of the justifications used by prison administrators to continue the level system that serves to control movement across the facility. This reality places captives in a difficult position; to be Human is to exert control as a means to liberation, resilience, and movement, but their controls often lead to restrictive measures that can make them feel as if they have little say over their bodies, materials, and mobility.

Finally, in the Conclusion, I focus on how the construction of prisons and Human are tightly linked, and I demonstrate that incarcerated people seeking to become Human, and captives and correctional officers performing Human maintenance work, cannot be simplified into easy narratives or good/bad binaries. After all, survival often relies upon tough choices and uncomfortable feelings. To finish this dissertation, I provide some practical changes that participants believe should be implemented at the DEF.

**Chapter 2**  
**Mobility Matters: Unsettling Punishment at the Desert Echo Facility**

A small, brown bird flitted between the razor wire atop the security fence dividing the prison compound. On one side were prison housing units One and Two, the education building, and the sergeant's work area. Prison housing units Three through Five, Medical, Chapel, and the Chow Hall sprawled across the other side. Mr. Thomas lived in what was known as the "5 As." Prison administrators placed validated gang members in this building where they resided, alone, in their 8-x-12-foot cells for 20 hours every day. Mr. Thomas often looked out his thick plastic window, stained by weather and scratches, and watched birds move between the cyclone fences that blocked his own everyday movement. He often dreamed of running miles into the desert, hoping the sun would bleach his bones before he could be brought back to his cell. While often wishing for permanent release, he didn't dare bring physical harm to himself for fear of looking like a victim who could not handle the violent onslaught of American punishment. Instead, he watched the birds, and today his eyes caught the wren moving with ease around the razor wire. This bird was a nuisance. Its tiny feet pounded in Mr. Thomas' chest, like a second heartbeat, every time it hopped in the air and landed on the fence, producing labored breath and small beads of sweat on his forehead. It reminded him of what he could not do. He couldn't move between the cages and he definitely couldn't fly away. He was forced to sit in this tiny room where his outstretched arms almost touched the width of the white, concrete walls. He watched the wren intently, trying to understand why it was allowed to move in ways he was not, feeling more confined with each move the bird made. He usually hoped birds would fly away from this place and make a home somewhere safer and less metallic. But when it finally glided out of sight, he hated that bird. He felt so lonely watching it soar into the distance, fluttering over the horizon that caged him. Still, he hoped that bird found a new home, one more hospitable, less austere.

But if it ever came near him when he was outside, he would smash it with angry fists and feet, destroying its ability to leave this prison and ensuring it would never again move between the fences so easily.

Mr. Thomas turned away from the window only to find his walls moving once again. He took three deep breaths to try to make them stop, but when he inhaled the walls moved towards him, and only moved away upon exhaling. His breath was regulating wall movements again and he needed to make it stop. He grabbed a piece of paper only to feel it violently vibrate in his hand, when he realized it was classification paper that bore the name of the prison embossed on top. He balled it up and threw it on the floor near his cell door. He grabbed a blank piece of paper he received from an education worker and breathed a little easier. The paper was college-ruled and felt safer than the State paper he had just tossed. He began writing a letter to his girlfriend, telling her how much he loved her and that he hoped she could visit soon. The wall movements began to slow and eventually grow still once again, save for an occasional ripple that made his body jerk and pause. He had to make sure the walls didn't keep moving, because that would lead to the floor tossing like a wave which, in turn, made time slow down. The letter writing helped but he knew it was only a matter of time before he lost full control of the materials around him again. Time was against him, but all he had was time.

Mr. Thomas came to the Desert Echo Facility from a neighboring state where he was convicted of his first crime at 16 years old. Once imprisoned, he murdered an incarcerated man and associated with the Aryan Brotherhood. Although he maintains that he had no interest in white supremacy, prison administrators punished him for gang membership and placed him in solitary confinement for a decade. Currently serving a life sentence without parole, he often details how it feels to have his body catalogued with point values within categories he did not

create. Upon arrival to the DEF system, Mr. Thomas was immediately fingerprinted, photographed, had his body inspected for tattoos and other markings, and his DNA processed. He was used to these procedures after spending more than two decades in State prisons, but he still hated the feelings created when they photographed him without his permission and spoke about him in such a clinical manner. It felt as if he was not a human being, but rather a specimen to be studied and categorized in ways he could not fully understand. Worse, he felt cloistered: pent into physical spaces as small as the boxes on the premade forms where correctional workers marked his height, weight, aliases, race, date of birth, social security number, and a list of his enemies. No one asked him what it felt like to be 'processed' in these ways. Instead, they ordered him to take off his clothes, sign numerous paper forms, and spoke to him in an abrupt manner, as they noted his white skin, bald head, brown eyes, muscular build, and numerous tattoos. The nakedness didn't bother him anymore, but the glaring staff made him want to shrink into himself or rip out his watchers' eyes.

Once correctional workers completed this initial intake he was passed along to Behavioral Health and Medical workers who classified his physical and mental status by asking questions from more forms. When he attempted to provide details as to why he was feeling anxious or how he may have a heart murmur, he was quieted and told he was providing too much information, and that there was not time for all his concerns. Another correctional worker told him that he was an escape risk, and would be flagged in a paper file folder and in computer files as a continuous threat who needed close observation. He tried to explain that the 'escape' was really something small that took place over 20 years ago, when he ran away from a cop car after being handcuffed. It didn't matter. The escape was noted and flagged in the prison system. For all the questions and accusations thrown his way, no one had introduced themselves. Maybe they

did and he just couldn't remember their names because they all acted towards him in similar manners. He kept looking for empathy or a glimmer of understanding in his captors' faces, but found only distant looks, exhaustion, judgment, and apathy. Another correctional worker sat in front of him and demanded his attention. His surroundings came into focus and he realized he had been sitting in a small, sterile room on a backless stool for hours. The room echoed with every movement and smelled of coarse chemicals, purchased at the cheapest price through State contracts and with no concern for the health problems they could create. He became irritated and refused to answer more questions. The officer advised him that he was with the Threat Action Unit (TAU) and that his questions would be answered. Mr. Thomas acquiesced and replied "No" to all the queries that seemed to center around gang affiliation and drug use. These were the prison cops, so they were never to be trusted or reasoned with. After the cop left, he sat in the room handcuffed to his waist and forced to lean forward, which hurt his back and made it difficult to breathe. The metal rings made his hands numb and he felt the familiar panic about his vascular circulation. Mostly, he wondered why they felt the need to cuff him in the middle of the prison. Where was he going to go, anyway? And he wouldn't do anything violent unless they forced him. He became angry and yelled that he wanted to get out of the room. No one replied and he knew no one would listen to him even if they returned. If only they would loosen the cuffs, he could breathe easier and adjust his position. Forty-five minutes passed before a worker came back into the room to tell him where he would live for the rest of his life. The monologue went something like this:

You're a level IV inmate which means you will live in a cell by yourself for most of the day. You received too many points to be placed at a lower level and you're an escape risk. We discussed your situation and determined that you are a security threat and we must treat you as such. You may have intentions that we cannot ascertain and we can never really know what you're going to do. Sign here so we can get you to your cell.

Mr. Thomas signed the form, wondering what the point system meant and how he could be considered such a risk after all this time in prison. They took him to a large building with '5A' painted on it but never took off his handcuffs. He thus had to walk hunched over, attempting to move faster when they ordered him to keep up. His body ached and his arms felt as if they could fall off at any moment. In the distance, he heard birds chirping and passed two millipedes wriggling across the hot concrete. He stepped on the insect nearest him, and enjoyed hearing the small explosion and feeling the crunch under his foot. He followed them through a mechanized gate and two large metal doors that he was not allowed to touch. When he saw his cell, he panicked; claustrophobia set in along with the realization that he would die in that tiny room.

### **Locking Down Mobility**

Desert Echo Facility incarcerated people often asked me if I understood why correctional administrators and staff worried so much about physical movement in the prison. In the early days of fieldwork, I was never able to provide a satisfying answer, and I usually irritated the people I countered by asking them why they found that particular question so important. It became clear that I needed to provide an answer. Looking around the compound, architectural features marked the efforts to control physical movement through every construction: not only due to razor-wire-topped fences and locked cages, but also in how incarcerated people followed paths laid out before them. This particular mobility concentration centered on correctional beliefs that captives' physical movement must be constrained and managed for the safety of all workers, 'inmates,' and society at large, but also to ensure 'improper' relationships did not manifest on the compound. Prison administrators placed incarcerated people in individual cells facing a security center, hung locks on every fence, and held captives in stratified security levels. They used computer programs for gate and housing access, watched video surveillance, filled out paper

forms to document incarcerated people's physical locations and their movement patterns for employment or programming needs, and listened for trip wires bordering a desert that would sound an alarm, to make escape both physically and imaginatively dangerous. The men and trans women held captive at the DEF also maintained specific routes held together by concrete, detailed schedules, spatial constructions, and speed patterns. "Pay attention to why they lock us up and lock us down" is something I would hear most days from people living within cells and slightly larger cages. "Come back here when you really paying attention." However, paying attention required a closeness (both physically and interdependently) that was strongly prohibited at the DEF. Staff frowned upon and actively guarded against any worker (or confused researcher) who touched an incarcerated person, even in handshake. They also constantly feared sexual relationships and the sharing of contraband materials between incarcerated people and everyone else.

As I repeatedly returned to people with attempts at answering their question about physical confinement, I was usually told to leave again, because I had not yet learned anything. I found this response frustrating for several reasons, but especially because it was so difficult to meet with incarcerated people at higher security levels (in this case, Level IV). Prison administrative polices required that I wait at dozens of blocked entrances – locked gates, mechanized doors, metal detectors – and move through burning summer sunlight, wind-swept dirt, and correctional-worker stares. Always a hot mess when I finally arrived at this unit, I would glare at the individuals who told me I understand nothing, and worse, that I was wasting their time. Wasting the time of people locked in small rooms for 20 hours a day? Months into this cycle, I lost my temper when Mr. Ruiz, a heavy-set Chicano man in his early 30s and already



incarcerated for 11 years, told me I was doing nothing more than metaphorically “jerk[ing myself] off,” beginning the conversation below:

MG: I can’t believe you’re making me come out here every day and then immediately telling me to leave. I get stopped by all these locked gates, and correctional officers treat me like I’m doing something wrong.

Mr. Ruiz (with lips pursed, eyebrows up, and mocking tone): And how does that make your feel, *bebito* [baby boy]?

MG (loudly and arrogantly): I’m not acting like a baby. I’m just tired of doing this over and over. I’d rather just stay in one area than move across this compound every day. At least then so many staff members wouldn’t worry why I move around so much. Maybe then I’d be treated better and not feel so isolated while I’m here.

Mr. Ruiz (ever the charmer, looking intensely in my eyes and leaning towards me): You can come back tomorrow. But first, imagine how it feels for us to be here day in and day out. You whine because you have to feel isolated for a few hours a day when we live this all the time. You don’t get to be our friends, *mijo* [my son]. We don’t get to walk outside whenever we want. We have to live by their [referring to correction staff] rules and your rules. And every day is harder than the last. The lockup weighs you down more and more. You feel it in your bones, *mijo*.

Embarrassed by my ignorance and the sarcasm in his chosen words *bebito* and *mijo*, I left the unit understanding that mobility entailed more than moving physically from one place to another, or being confined and transported against your will. By placing incarcerated people in small cells and on rigid schedules, prison administrators simultaneously blocked access to and emphasized specific material and social relations, suspending them in sensorial spatio-temporal constructions that some people felt “in their bones.” Mr. Ruiz lives inside an 8-x-12-foot cell, 20 hours every day, feeling the vibrations of the concrete structures, the echoes swirling in the air and into his body, the green and red cleaning chemicals burning his throat and coating his tongue, the walls moving towards and crushing him, the glares of correctional workers, the absence of sunlight and wind, the torn cot mattress, the stale air tearing his skin at night as the State-issued blanket left

his feet uncovered, the blinding flashlight the correctional workers pointed in his direction, and birds chirping and moving freely outside his unit.

In this chapter, I argue that the Desert Echo Facility creates unsettling mobilities that torture incarcerated people in often invisible ways, such as the experience of moving walls and vibrating paper. I define unsettling mobility as unexpected movement by inanimate objects that disrupts naturalized Subject/Object and Life/Non-Life binaries. As DEF captives live in worlds of violent displacement and incarceration, their bodies become sensitive to the movement and vibrations of Subjects and Objects around them. Operationalized unsettling mobilities at the DEF permeate everyday life, resulting in captives feeling as if “inanimate” materials are alive, while they are not. Instead of homogenized, easily distinguished movement practices, I assert that DEF mobilities enmesh in innumerable ways that challenge current conceptions of what it means to be mobile or confined. An ethnographic mobility analysis from the perspectives of DEF incarcerated people also demonstrates that, although many imagine prisons to be places of social and material restriction, prisons exist simultaneously as spaces where specific relations become amplified during everyday correctional operations. Following repeated requests from the men and trans women at the DEF, I here attempt to make readers understand what it feels like to live inside a prison in order to challenge rigid preconceptions about correctional life.

Mobility remains a central concern for many in the united states<sup>v</sup>, exemplified, for example, in manifest destiny, the american dream, slavery, a progressive teleology, reservation systems, ghettos, and mass incarceration. It is nonetheless extremely difficult to disentangle how mobility intersects with perceptions of status, ability, and potential across and between constructions of the ideal *american* Human who is able to move freely, and in specific ways, sense their worlds and form socially sanctioned relations. After all, what gets counted as

‘american’ depends upon whom, where, and when you ask. I center on incarcerated people at the Desert Echo Facility to situate mobility in sociohistorical contexts. However, it is important to remember that the DEF sits on landscapes imagined, created, maintained, and carved by Indigenous peoples and within contexts of contemporary enslavement and genocidal State practices. Prison architects designed the DEF through local and global visions of containment, punishment, and austerity. Staff participate within economic practices that slowly break their bodies and damage their children. Incarcerated people disappear from their communities into desert compounds, where State workers bid with national and international corporations to provide them with the cheapest, most stringent, and shoddiest materials. Though in later chapters I attempt to show how Mr. Thomas and Mr. Ruiz, along with their fellow ‘convicts,’<sup>vi</sup> create novel movement feelings and are more than their confinement, it is important that I first try to make their worlds accessible to readers, in order to explain why watching a bird moving outside one’s window can make a person want to kill.

### **Mobility, from Whose Perspective?**

Scholars have long utilized mobility as a structuring concept even if they had not interrogated their assumptions about the category itself. Early anthropological works crafted ‘Native Others’ and ‘Savages’ partly based upon ethnocentric mobility conceptions. In the latter, Indigenous peoples *either* became creatures bound and confined to specific locations, marking them pristine and authentic to ‘mobile’ outsiders (Frazer 1890, 2012; Morgan 1877; Tyler 1871; see Narayan 1993; Salazar 2011) or rootless nomads incapable of forming ‘civilized’ lifeways (see Rosaldo 1988). Philosophers concentrated some time on roadways, bridges, intersections, and airliners to formulate theories about mobility’s importance to spatial constructions and power, asserting the dynamism inherent in these creations (Marx 1992, 1887; Gluckman 1958; Heidegger 1977;

Lefebvre 1974). But what counts as mobility never materialized within these works, possibly because many euro-american researchers assumed mobile universals. After all, numerous enlightenment stories, writings “from Montaigne to Rousseau,”<sup>vii</sup> utilized mobility metaphors and terms as stand-ins for rational thought and identity markers (Benhabib and Resnik 2009; Van Den Abbeele 1992). In these works, who and what mattered often arose through assumptions about movement.

Across theorizations and disciplines, mobility has long been a central problem difficult to unwind. How can some ‘primitive’ and Othered peoples be represented as mobile, while others remain immobile, and what does this say about ‘civilized’ euro-americans? To be civilized (read: cultured), in part meant that you had some form of physical rootedness, but also the individual ability to move in ways you deemed important and necessary, moving cyclically from fixity to movement and back to fixity (Tsing 1993). This mobility model linked directly to colonial practices where euro-americans created degrees of movement and overlaid them onto diverse peoples, in attempts to craft manageable populations (Rosaldo 1988). From such a sedentarist perspective, uncivilized populations also need to be surveilled to ensure they did not cross constructed borders and moved in inappropriate ways. It was clear to many, but not all, that State systems – created by and filtered through embodied peoples – viewed particular physical movements negatively, whereas territorial fixity was deemed positive and enlightened (Cresswell 2006; Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Scott 1998; Tuan 1977).

Countering notions of immobile, authentic natives and challenging the necessity for State surveillances, literatures establishing movement as the natural state of humanity arose. Suddenly, mobile people were everywhere and they were acting as concept metaphors for descriptions of social practices, such as de Certeau’s “pedestrian” (1984), Said’s “forced migrant” (1993), and

Deleuze and Guittari's "nomad" (1987).<sup>viii</sup> Anthropologists and philosophers investigated and called on their comrades to trace routes in order to view culture as situated but also in motion (Clifford 1997), and to think in terms of flows when considering people, ideas, and capital (Appadurai 1996; Baumann 2000, 2002, 2007; , Castells 1996; Harvey 2005). By attempting to reconfigure previously imagined immobile peoples, scholars made everyone and everything mobile, but these conceptions and languages created "frictionless" and naturalized societies without sociohistorical contexts (Rockefeller 2011; Tsing 2005). Seeking to upend this ahistoricity, endeavors to view mobility as paradigmatic made waves (Urry 2007). For a moment, it seemed the mobility problem had been solved, but only because old dichotomies grew in shade. New paths needed to be realized.

In response, scholars removed physical movement as mobility's sole arbiter to pairing it with imagination (Brann 1991; Glick-Shiller 2010; Robinson and Anderson 2002; Salazar 2010; Salazar and Smart 2011; Sturma 2002), affect (Stewart 2007; Stoller 1989), space (Massey 1994; Munn 1990; Sassen 1999; Wolf 1982), the body (Foucault 1977), and disability (Davis 2013; Freund 2001; Garland-Thomson 1997; Shuttleworth 2012; Walker 2007). This scholarship made clear the importance of contextualizing mobility within local practices, placing ethnocentric assumptions under scrutiny. Conventional anthropological ideas cropped up with arguments for the necessity of emic interpretations and analyses, and cross-cultural comparisons. Once again, the progressive valence connoted to mobility – e.g., the ability to move in specific ways, equating mobility with positivist and teleological change, and that movement is the natural state of the world – moved aside for new and challenging ideas. Mobility and immobility came to be viewed as dialectical processes (Salazar 2011), relational (Anthius 1998), and practiced within simultaneity (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Scholarship now calls openly for increased

scrutiny towards mobility power relations and the continual need for unwinding the constructed mobile/immobile dichotomy (Salazar 2010).

Unsettling mobilities brings new dynamics to these theoretical arguments by once again grounding mobility within contextualized practices created by people with bodies, who animate very particular materialities, sensorialities, temporalities, and relationalities. People incarcerated at the DEF feel unsettling mobilities viscerally, materializing spatio-temporal fields as consequences of their confinement, and operationalized power relations enacted and enforced by everyday correctional living. While spatio-temporal fields can be mobile (Munn 1990), they can also be confining, contributing to sensory overload, relational deprivation, and uncontrollable urges or bodily reactions. Most importantly, not all movements feel the same or carry equal meanings to different peoples. How does one define Mr. Thomas' movements? Is he immobile due to his incarceration, even though he can still physically move (in the ableist sense) and imagine movement? Is his movement lessened or weakened in his current state, or is it just reconfigured? What does his mobility feel like to him, and what power dynamics construct his feeling as mobile, or not? What makes Mr. Ruiz feel mobility "in his bones?" And what happens when different mobile spatio-temporal fields fold into one another, challenging unsettling mobilities in lived spaces?

Mr. Thomas's and Mr. Ruiz's movements, like that of many of their cohort cannot be easily contained within distinct, premade categories, and they have different ways of feeling movement that are not easily viewed because they are smelled, touched, tasted, and spatialized, and relational, temporal, material, simultaneous, and powerful. Demonstrating that mobility should not be thought of in terms of metaphorical stand-ins for social practices, but rather, as manifestations worthy of their own study, I center mobility at the DEF without naturalizing stasis

or movement of any kind. Following Salazar and Glick Schiller's (2013) call to scrutinize mobility power relations, this research makes evident how mobility is infused with cultural meanings (Frello 2008; Greenblatt 2009), but also how it produces hierarchical practices often used for punishment.

### **Moving Walls and the Power of Vibrating Bones**

Mr. Ramirez lived a few cells down from Mr. Thomas and they gradually became confidants, though they never fully trusted each other. Most incarcerated people found it hard to believe that anyone could be completely trustworthy in an environment built on oppression and deception. Returning to prison due to a parole violation, Mr. Ramirez largely blamed harsh societal judgments and a deceptive ex-girlfriend for his return to the DEF. Unable to secure permanent employment due to his criminal record – digitized and papered portfolios that followed him long after he exited prison – he became depressed and angry. After smacking his ex-girlfriend in the face during an argument about his parental and visitation rights, a judge revoked his parole and placed him back under direct prison control for the next eight years. Mr. Ramirez often cried in his cell thinking about how both his daughters would grow up without a father in their life, but always made clear that his brown skin, Spanish surname, and working-poor background did not define his existence. Because Mr. Thomas had lived through incarceration for decades, he knew the dangers of isolation and the resulting destruction it could cause, so he 'befriended' his neighbor, Mr. Ramirez, to help him survive the parole revocation, and to ameliorate some of his own loneliness.

Within months, Mr. Thomas and Mr. Ramirez developed a bond that challenged their perceived gang statuses. They shared stories, food, paper, and hygiene products, and coordinated television program-watching from their individual cells. Mr. Ramirez, a Mexican-American man

with darker brown skin, found Mr. Thomas' white supremacist history to be a result of prison racial politics. Staff openly wondered how these two became close 'friends,' though neither Mr. Thomas nor Mr. Ramirez ever called themselves that. Important to both men, they worked as sanitation specialists which allowed them to be outside their cells and unit more than other people. They earned reputations as hard workers who caused no trouble. But even with the added time outside his cell, Mr. Ramirez began to deteriorate and become noticeably agitated. His restricted physical movement, paired with the surrounding confining architectural structures, shook his body uncontrollably; he experienced his legs quivering, eyes fluttering, hands jittering, and breath moving in and out in shallow spurts. Worried he would be perceived as weak by correctional staff and incarcerated people alike, he often retreated to his cell. Feeling like a caged animal pacing in his small room, his heart pounding and anger rising, Mr. Ramirez would fall to his knees, cover his ears with his hands in attempts to block out the noises around him, and whisper words of encouragement to himself. "It's only seven more years," he repeated. The cell walls closed in on him as his heartbeat quickened and extremities went numb. He wanted to cry and shout but instead, kicked his cell door and ripped some classification papers. He would regret these actions later, but for now, he needed to stop the walls from vibrating and closing in. He kicked at them until they stopped moving, only to realize that two correctional officers were standing in front of his open cell door. He didn't remember the door opening and he was confused as to why they were ordering him to exit the cell slowly. He didn't listen, and instead charged at them before they could shut the door. He would not be locked inside this cell again and he would make these officers let him out of this prison. The correctional officers did what they had been trained to do. They knocked him to the ground with pepper spray, fists, and harsh words and escorted him to the level VI units, where his physical movement would become even



more restricted. Mr. Thomas watched the officers drag Mr. Ramirez past his cell with his hand on his small window. Mr. Ramirez passed out of sight and the mechanic doors that guarded the entrance slammed shut, echoing throughout the unit and yanking a shudder from Mr. Thomas' body. He worried about what would happen to Mr. Ramirez, but mostly, he felt sad that he no longer had someone with whom to pass the time. This had happened before, though. And it would happen again.

A few hours after the extraction,<sup>ix</sup> Mr. Thomas left his cell for his two-hour tier time<sup>x</sup> and stared inside Mr. Ramirez' cell. Correctional officers opened all the bottom-tier doors with the push of a button, ignoring the possibility that anyone could enter the cell and take the items left inside. Mr. Thomas did just that. He moved quickly, grabbing shampoo, paper, soap, and Cup O'Noodle soups before skulking back to his own cell unnoticed. He looked outside his window and watched a bird fly over three fences and felt his hands start shaking. He took one of the pieces of paper from Mr. Ramirez' cell and began writing a letter to the man he watched get dragged out of the unit just a few hours earlier. He wrote about how he couldn't wait to watch Jeopardy with him that night and how he saved some soups for him. The shaking subsided and he grabbed the shampoo and soap as he went to the small shower in the corner of the unit. He used the shampoo on his head, though he had no hair, and washed his body with Mr. Ramirez' soap. Later, he lay on his cot with the shampoo and soap smell lingering on his skin. He felt comforted by the citrus scents even though he knew they would be obliterated by the cleaning chemicals in the morning. At least the smells would stop the walls from moving and allow his body to rest, even for just one night.

Incarcerated people inside prison cells at the DEF feel the vibrations of doors slamming shut, the wind smashing into their units, the man exercising in the next cell, footsteps stomping

along their corridor, and the humming of their own breath and heartbeat, even though they remain ‘motionless’ in their cells. These vibrations<sup>xi</sup> fuse with captive bodies, generating movements often unnoticed and potentially torturous. Locked inside his small cell and with no way out, Mr. Ramirez felt his walls pulse with every breath and heartbeat until eventually the walls moved towards him, invading the spatial constructions crafted for and by him. The walls grab at bodies desperately trying to escape confinement, but only the incarcerated noticed. Mr. Ramirez, like many of his fellow comrades, kicks at the walls to stop the enclosing concrete and tears at the air to prevent the vibrations in his body. But they do so to survive the violence of supposedly inanimate materials moving in ways that threaten entire cosmologies.

Most DEF captives mark a clear division between *animate* Subjects and *inanimate* Objects, placing themselves in the former category and walls, floors, and other everyday materials in the latter. In this, like everyone, incarcerated people are creating and sustaining animacy hierarchies – the individual and collective ranking of noun phrases from most Subject/Animate to Object/Inanimate (Chen 2012; Woolford 1999). As DEF people naturalized their particular animacy hierarchies before their violent displacement and confinement, from their language to their bodily habitus, their Subject and Object designations often stratified in both perception and sensation. However, inanimate objects seemingly come alive in the prison, in some form or fashion, upending many people’s animacy hierarchies. Inanimate materials begin to move in ways that displace captives’ place in the world and disrupt the distinction between their bodies and everything else. As peoples already uprooted from their homes and feeling a loss of bodily autonomy, inanimate materials coming alive pushes them down the animacy hierarchy, as they simultaneously suffer from these unexpected movements. *Materials move when they cannot*. Eventually, mobile matter animates unsettling mobilities.

Reflecting what incarcerated people notice, Mel Y. Chen (2012) questions how matter that is considered inanimate and immobile animates everyday life when repositioned from different perspectives. Matter deemed inanimate exists within cultural ecologies that display a “fragile division between inanimate and animate – that is beyond human and animal – [and] is relentlessly produced and policed and maps important political consequences of that distinction” (Chen 2012: 2). What people do and do not consider animate stews beneath cultural constructs, only to boil over in unexpected ways. Always bubbling under the surface, animacy hierarchies become troubled when confronted by unexpected power relations that manifest within material life. DEF captives feel inanimate materials moving, often merging with their bodies, in ways that make these substances feel alive and out of their control, as Mr. Ramirez explains:

I not only have to worry about the guys around me and cops [COs], but I also got to worry about making sure that all these things stay put. It makes me crazy because I don't know why it's happening, and I can't make it stop. These *things* move and come at me and it's like, you know, this can't be happening, but it is. It makes you question your sanity. That stuff isn't alive, but it's moving. How can that happen?

Living within cells and policed by correctional staff, incarcerated people suffer a cosmological break that threatens their relationships with everything around them. They must deal with the well-documented “social death” of prison life (Davis 2003) while simultaneously suffering from foreign animacies that bring forth bewildering unsettling mobilities.

When inanimate matter moves, it does more than challenge animacy hierarchies; simultaneously, such movement signifies *aliveness* to many DEF incarcerated people, thereby forcing them to feel movement in unsettling ways. What counts as alive entangles with animacies and materialities to produce unsettling mobilities, which many feel cannot be fully controlled, if at all. For incarcerated people, not-alive materials such as walls and floors exist within animacy hierarchies where humans supposedly reign supreme, even if they are “locked up

and locked down.” The division between Life and Nonlife (or alive and not-alive) does not exist within a vacuum, nor can its truth be discovered “out there” in some world (X-Files be damned). Elizabeth A. Povinelli’s (2016: 4) concept of geontopower – “discourses, affects, and tactics used in late liberalism to maintain or shape the coming relationship of the distinction between Life and Nonlife” – makes clear the social work inherent in this divide. It is created and maintained by power relations that mark particular matter as alive Subjects and the rest as not-alive Objects. Many euro-american peoples situate those called Human, itself contested and negotiated, firmly in the alive Subject category and atop the hierarchy (Alaimo 2010; Povinelli 2015; Todd 2016). Eventually, DEF incarcerated people find themselves questioning their dominion over everyday materials when non-life begins to move and disobey the natural order of things.

These unnatural movements mainly manifest in moving walls and painful vibrations that people reckon with daily. Mr. Johnson, an African-American man incarcerated for two years, informed me:

I try to get the walls to stop moving by throwing my hands all around me and kicking my feet away from me. It works sometimes because the more you move the less you feel the *tingles or vibrations* of the stuff around you. COs think you’re crazy, but the floor feels more stable when the walls stop moving. If the walls begin to move in on you then you know you’re about to crumble...It’s like a gunshot. You hear that and you run and hide. But there’s nowhere to hide here. The walls move and you’re stuck, feeling them come at you. The worst part is when the walls move with your breath. Every time you breathe, the walls get closer and your chest feels tight. That’s the worst because you can’t tell where the walls end and your body begins.

Mr. Johnson explains that his breath enjoins with his cell walls when he feels the tingles or vibrations of the materials around him. His body melds with the concrete until it is difficult to distinguish between the two. By feeling the walls move when they are not supposed to, his confinement manifests entanglements with materials that constrict his breath and make non-

animate materials seem more alive than his own body. Worse, when he breathes, the walls move with his body, encroaching upon him closer with each inhalation. When the mechanized doors open and slam shut or when correctional staff walk along the unit floors, the vibrations of movement enfold many captives in painful grasps hidden from those living outside prison cells.

When people first mentioned inanimate movement to me, I repeatedly asked what it meant when walls moved, because I couldn't understand what that felt like or even visualize this reality. I did not see moving walls, nor did I feel the movements these individuals lived every day. Mr. Crawford, a euro-american man incarcerated for over two decades and serving a life sentence, explained:

It's like when you put a marshmallow in a microwave. It puffs up as it's being heated and fills the space more and more until you worry that it will explode. The walls move like that. They puff out at ya and then slowly go back to normal as you find ways to cope. I don't worry about it so much anymore because I know how to control it better now. You just start doing something like writing letters to friends and family and it slows down or goes away. I feel for the guys who don't have that though. They're the ones you gotta worry about. They'll break down and then come at ya like a wild animal.

A few incarcerated people used the marshmallow example when I asked them to explain how walls move. What became clear about this type of movement is that measuring tapes don't matter. I saw people living inside their small cells, an already unimaginable existence to me, but their cells become even smaller as the walls move in, constricting until there was only a few cubic feet of room to breathe, eat, write letters, go to the bathroom, and pray. As the walls puffed like a marshmallow in a microwave, DEF captives felt trapped in smaller and smaller spaces and often couldn't figure out where the boundaries of their bodies existed.

Many captives attempted to regulate their breathing as a result of the moving walls, and resented staff who generated vibrations unnecessarily. Attempting to survive what many first assume to be a panic attack, they breathe slowly, close their eyes, and remain still. Unfortunately,

the walls keep moving, and the floor tosses in waves. This is not a panic attack, as Mr. Sanchez, then incarcerated for four years, explains:

It really feels like you're on the ocean. The floor is bucking and the walls are closing in. You just lose it, man. You do anything to stop that feeling. You look out your window, hoping it will stop. But then you see COs and animals moving around and they seem to be moving so fast while you're stuck in this cell. It's like time slows down here and the world speeds up. You feel trapped because time ain't moving and you feel everything else moving around you while you stuck. Your bones feel like jelly when that happens.

Many men viscerally feel walls moving, "jelly bones," and time slowing down in their bodies.

Mr. Johnson explains that walls can move with bodily breath. Mr. Sanchez informs us that bones feel like jelly as the walls close in and the floor moves like waves on an ocean. And time slows down for many of these men. These painful moments feel as if they may never end because time becomes sluggish, slowly crawling along as supposedly inanimate materials move all around them. The vibrations in the walls and floors merge with incarcerated bodies in ways that confuse body and material distinctions, generating unsettling mobilities often unnoticed by those not living in prison.

Most DEF incarcerated people find small ways to survive the visceral onslaught of punishment. Captives squeeze their bodies with their arms when they think no one is paying attention. They sit quietly, trying to ignore everyone and everything around them. They also exercise to keep physically fit, to fight movements that destroy their bodies, but also to feel different bodily movements. But these practices do not always keep walls from moving as they breathe. Eventually, most people crumble. Mr. Ramirez tried all of these practices, and many others that I will discuss in chapter five, to no avail. Eventually, he fell to his knees, kicked at the walls, and attacked correctional officers who could not understand what he felt. Mr. Thomas

would later tell me that he was pretty sure that the walls kept moving as COs dragged Mr. Ramirez out of the prison unit.

Not all incarcerated people feel the walls move in painful ways. Native Americans never spoke of walls moving or feeling as if their breath moved with concrete structures around them. Diné peoples constitute the clear majority of Indigenous people at the DEF, and reside mostly in Level III and IV security rankings.<sup>xii</sup> Whereas African-American, Caucasian, and Latinx people kicked and punched at the air in their cells, I never observed Diné peoples doing this. But many felt vibrations in everything around them. Mr. Samson, incarcerated for 12 years explains:

I've had a lot of convicts ask me about moving walls, but I don't know what they mean. The walls have never moved on me, but they vibrate. There's a hum to this place. It gets louder the longer you've been locked up. You don't just hear it though. It's not like an annoying sound buzzing in your ear. You feel it in your bones. It's like everything is vibrating and you can't make it stop. I don't think it's meant to stop. It makes you so angry that sometimes you just rage at people...Other times you just lie in your cell, hoping it will go away. But it never does.

While Diné people did not feel walls moving with their breath, they did feel vibrations in their bones and they could not make it stop. Instead, they attempted to lie in their cells, alone, or attack others in fits of rage. But these actions often made their lives worse, as Mr. Samson continues:

Being alone in your cell doesn't really solve anything. Sometimes you want to be by yourself because you're tired of being around the same people every damn day. But eventually that feeling gets worse and you have to find a way to be with people to try to make it better. It's like you're stuck in here and you really don't like anyone, but if you try to go it alone, you break quicker. Sometimes you just have to find someone or something that allows you to do your own time in a way that keeps your body from breaking.

Diné DEF incarcerated people's bodies break quicker if they can't find a way to do their "own time," but living alone in a tiny cell manifests movements that continuously vibrate. Mr. Samson finds himself between concrete rocks and hard choices: hide away as best he can in his cell,

contending with vibrations that might throw him into fits of rage, or “be” with people that you dislike or even possibly despise.

Mr. Samson’s comment that the vibrations aren’t “meant to stop” provides a distinct perspective about cosmological construction. Many Diné peoples do not adhere to euro-american practices that mark categories, such as animate/inanimate or alive/not-alive, based upon notions of separateness or distinctness, but instead rely upon inclusive groupings (Reichard 1944; see also Epple 1998). Diné DEF people already understand their material worlds as heavily interdependent, and so it should come as no surprise that many Diné individuals do not feel cosmologically upended when ‘objects’ around them interact with their daily lives. Mr. Feshad, a Diné man incarcerated for eight years, reflects:

I hear some of these white people talking ‘bout how the world is upside down and things are coming alive. That’s nonsense. They’re just used to being in control and now they understand they never were. It’s kind of funny until they freak out and ruin it for the rest of us...So many convicts forget how to do their time and then you have to check them before they get you caught up in nonsense.

When I asked him why non-Indigenous people of color experienced some of the same feelings as their white comrades, he told me that too many “Blacks and Mexicans forgot what the world actually was before white people told them what they think it is.” Mr. Feshad echoes Kim Tallbear’s (2015: 234) assertion that,

...Indigenous peoples have never forgotten that nonhumans are agential beings engaged in social relations that profoundly shape human lives. In addition, for many indigenous peoples, their nonhuman others may not be understood in even critical Western frameworks as *living*. “Objects” and “forces” such as stones, thunder, or stars are known within our ontologies to be sentient and knowing persons.

From an Indigenous person’s perspective, Human and nonhuman relationships and matter itself intertwine with one another, often in indistinguishable ways to euro-american peoples, and



hierarchical human-animal or human-material object category constructions are avoided, or at least attempted to be avoided (Tallbear 2015). But Mr. Samson's comment that vibrations aren't "meant to stop" has another meaning. The world he inhabits is heavily interdependent with relationships many would call nonhuman, but living within a small cell forces him into closer relationships with these materials than he desires. He, like many of his Indigenous and non-Indigenous brethren, has been violently displaced from his social and material landscapes, and placed in new surroundings as a form of punishment. Painful vibrations manifest and continue unabated for years, torturing bodies often through pulsating bones. The walls may not move in surprising ways, but everyday materials still generate unsettling mobilities to great anguish.

Many non-incarcerated people assume that walls don't move, and that people hallucinate these actions, or suffer some type of psychological disorder due to their imprisonment or an undiagnosed pre-existing mental condition. Some may even believe that captives lie about these feelings in search of sympathy that can be utilized for nefarious purposes. Most people I met refused to speak openly about moving walls and vibrating bones because of fears that no one would believe them or that they would appear weak. So, most captives only brought up the topic in the privacy of one-on-one interviews and with the promise that I wouldn't use their real names when I write. Importantly, Mr. Thomas's and Mr. Ramirez's feelings that the walls move toward them result not from some type of psychotic break or imaginings, but rather due to the violent and continuous assault of living in a cell for most of their days, where doors slam, correctional officers stare, and painful vibrations envelop their bodies. Unsettling mobilities manifest as consequences of everyday materials – structures that literally confine bodies – seeming to come alive or incarcerated people being forced into undesired relationships with these same materials.

Most captives believe that walls and floors are not supposed to move and that their bodies should not enmesh with the materiality of the prison. Breath shouldn't move with walls.

But still, many people sense not-alive matter coming alive through unsettling movements. Non-Indigenous and Indigenous people alike reside within cells that can spatially constrict at any moment, as unsettling mobilities penetrate their bodies through breath or vibrations. As physical movement signifies aliveness for many DEF captives, they must grapple with what their restricted movement means for their everyday lives. As their breath moves with walls and as floors toss them around, they face a world in which they are not as alive as the structures that confine them. Forced to question just how alive they are, DEF captives' sense of mobility unsettles as a result of asymmetrical power relations between themselves and everyone and everything else. As Mr. Ruiz informs us all, "You feel it in your bones, *mijo*."

### **The Paper State**

In the first narrative, prison administrators classify Mr. Thomas with the help of pre-made paper forms. The State corrections department utilizes classification processes to assess, monitor, and administer custody levels. New arrivals undergo an initial intake where paper and electronic forms document names, basic demographics (race, age, gender, aliases, enemies, SSN) and they are photographed and fingerprinted while staff note tattoos and other identifying marks. Staff take DNA samples and provide each person (whom they designate male) with an inmate number. Each new arrival then undergoes medical and dental screening where State medical staff take temperatures, test blood pressure, and ask each person if they have any preconditions. The Threat Action Unit meets with the new arrival and interrogates them about gang affiliations and drug usage. All data are placed on paper forms that are supposed to be uploaded into a State prison computer system, though this does not always occur. Incarcerated people then sit in their

cells, alone, until they can participate in a meeting known as Orientation, where they must sign more paper forms as they meet the unit manager,<sup>xiii</sup> case worker, and representatives from multiple programming departments. Each person is then given another paper form with their custody score<sup>xiv</sup> based upon eight factors: history of institutional adjustment/violence, severity of current conviction, escape history, prior felony convictions, severity of prior felony convictions, alcohol/drug abuse, current age, and gang membership/activities past ten years. Points can be deducted over time, but captives often receive more points for minor and major infractions while in State custody. Throughout the entire process, incarcerated people do not get to provide input or explanations for any categories of the premade forms. Instead, they are told what they are, what they did, and, in effect, who they will always be.

As Mr. Ramirez felt the walls moving towards him, he punched at them to try to keep them away, and ripped his classification papers. When COs observed him, they saw a man moving in threatening ways, ripping State documents, arms thrashing, and tears streaming down his face. Mr. Ramirez felt these movements while workers could not comprehend them. Instead, they did what they had been trained to do. They attacked him and placed him in segregation where the walls would definitely keep moving. Through the door of his segregation cell (Level VI, where he must remain in a single-person cell 23 hours a day and placed in a cage outside for the remaining hour), I asked him why he ripped the classification papers. He advised that the papers always made him feel more stifled and that he hated keeping them in his cell. "It's like they have this power to confine me and make other things move in ways that I can't handle. COs also use those forms to put me in higher security living. I hate those fucking things." In ripping his classification paper forms, Mr. Ramirez also attempted to destroy what he felt contributed to his confinement. The papers did not just represent his confinement; they made him *feel* confined and

when he destroyed them, he felt the walls briefly stop moving, or slow down, as he regained control over his breath.

Watching these actions from outside the cells, I wondered why paper was one of the first things they grabbed when in the throes of moving walls and floors. Why paper? And what did it mean to destroy it? I observed 26 other individuals ripping and crumpling these items as their breath heaved and their bodies convulsed in sweaty, uncontrollable jerks. Some men screamed guttural cries as they frantically tore at the papers, while others quietly and methodically ripped small strips until all that remained was a shredded mess. Eventually, most people sought comfort by covering their bodies with their thin, blue blankets, laying on their cots with paper strewn around their cell.

I originally believed that destroying and crumpling paper served as a means to deal with correctional life. A tic. I stood outside cell doors watching men shred papers for more than 20 minutes before they seemed to calm down. Thinking of a made-for-TV mini-series I saw as a teenager (“The Langoliers”) where a character would tear paper into smaller and smaller pieces when in fits of anxiety, I mentioned to Mr. Sanchez that I understood why so many people participated in these actions. He laughed at me, explaining that I didn’t really know anything and that I should pay attention to which papers the men destroyed.

Yeah, they’re not ripping papers because of some panic attack. They’re trying to calm down from all the vibrations coming at ‘em. I don’t have to worry about it so much anymore because I don’t keep those things around me. I’ve been here a while now so people know what I’m in for. They don’t have to worry about me.

Mr. Sanchez was referring to the fact that he was not a Sex Offender – an adult man convicted of molesting or raping a child (a point I’ll come back to in a later chapter). Prison administrators utilize classification papers to place incarcerated people at what they consider the proper security level. The papers provide point values for arbitrary categories created through practices that

produce individual and collective legibilities. As the narrative opening this chapter explains, State officials move people through classification processes with little to no input from them. The men and women who enter the prison system must sign dozens of forms<sup>xv</sup> that work to remove context from their lives.

Susan A. Phillips (2012: 47) examines how State practices, specifically Los Angeles Police Department paperwork, create narratives of precision that “censors parts of a story, strategically remove individuals from certain social contexts, emphasize those same individuals within other contexts, and subsequently manufacture key images that justify the shape of police action.” Individuals on the punishing end of police force often contradict these narratives as partial and ignorant of all social context. And yet, the forms create legible people who exist in temporal stasis. The created individual becomes no more than their crime – itself an abstraction – which makes them legible to State systems. As James Scott (1998) makes clear, legibility is a multi-faceted process crafted for maintaining State authority. Narratives created by paper exude power frequently ignored during everyday activities. Namely, paper practices often manifest atomistic peoples and meanings that can be subjected to ‘rational’ measures including punishment.

At the DEF, prison paper practices shape social order through pre-made forms constituting what Matthew S. Hull (2012) has termed a “regime of paper documents.” Tending toward the semiotic, Hull demonstrates that government planners in urban Pakistan produce order through graphic artifacts – paper files, lists, maps – that mediate social and material relationships. These material techniques of control, shaped by high-modernist State systems (see Given 2004; Scott 1998), reconstitute social space as they simultaneously generate new meanings. But as regimes of paper travel in intended and unintended ways, people and paper

produce new effects that often undermine rational State policies. In the DEF context, premade forms that construct narratives of precision circulate daily, and classification papers create carbon copies of people who do not exist. DEF captives view these materials as violence because they “lock them up and lock them down.” These papers literally control movement in ways that reverberate throughout correctional everyday living.

Correctional systems deem classification processes of the utmost importance to maintain order within prison compounds. The DEF home state created an entire policy workbook just for classification purposes where the Classification and Risk Assessment document uses some version of the words classify/classification 449 times in 125 pages. There are classification processes for intake, daily events, evaluation periods, and instructions for workers. Incarcerated people understand the focus on classification all too well because they live the consequences of bureaucratic policies even as correctional staff implement them unevenly. State workers place marked classification papers in labeled files and computer programs and provide a copy to each captive. Most workers ask incarcerated people if they want a copy before they give them one, due to budgetary constraints, and most ask for the papers even though they cause harm. Mr. Johnson explains:

We all know that it costs them money to give us them papers, so we make them give it to us. It's one of the few things we can demand. They give us shitty food and medical [care] because they cheaping out on us. I hate those papers and destroy them the moment I get back to my cell. But I make them give it to me just the same.

As people already suffering without basic necessities, or at least being provided some necessities at bare minimum expense, they demand classification papers in response to having so many other material items taken away or restricted. Unfortunately, State papers cause incarcerated people to endure invisible pain as a direct result of these materials.

Captives at the Desert Echo Facility understand these materials as the State itself. As Mr. Thomas' narrative can attest, correctional workers do not need incarcerated people's input about their life, who they feel they are, their criminal activities, or their personal thoughts and emotions. Instead, workers fill out forms that classify DEF men and women based upon State-approved categories. One man likened this process to being on a job interview and having the interviewer tell you who you are and how qualified you seem to be. These papers produce specific versions of peoples, so that they can be categorized and regulated according to security levels deemed important within State corrections systems. Intelligently, people feel the paper to be the State itself, because the paper exudes power over their very existence. Further problems develop once the paper begins to vibrate, shaking DEF captives to their bones.

As classification papers violently vibrate in DEF people's hands, they frantically rip and crumple them as fast as possible. They also feel the paper moving in their cells and often hear a hum coming from the areas where they placed them. Like moving walls and tossing floors, people feel these movements viscerally, to the point that everything else in their worlds disappears until they can cease these actions. Mr. Ramirez, seeing my confusion, implored:

You have to understand that I know this sounds crazy. But these papers vibrate. It's like having a hundred cell phones going off at the same time and you can't turn them off. They move and make this noise. It's this low hum that gets louder the longer it goes...And when you pick up those papers it hurts a little bit. It's not like someone stabbing you or nothing, but it feels like when your hands go too numb and it hurts to the point that you worry that something went wrong with your hand. The only way to make it stop is to rip those fucking things up. You have to get rid of them.

Mr. Thomas added to this exchange a few days later, saying:

Your mind gets cloudy and you can't focus on anything until you find the problem...The papers hurt your bones. It's like your bones vibrate with the paper. I don't know how else to describe it, and you probably won't believe me anyway, but I feel it happening. It hurts. Tearing up those papers makes your body feel better. You can breathe easier, at least until it starts all over again.

These men understand that to ‘outsiders’ – those who have not lived through their type of imprisonment – vibrating paper makes no sense. But they live with these feelings every day, and their torture continues with little attention directed their way.

Multiple people complained that correctional workers needlessly bother them with mailed paperwork, unprompted visits, unrequested physical and psychological examinations, and required programming such as education and addiction services. Unprompted visits entail materials bumping and sliding into and across each other, generating vibrations throughout the prison unit. Incarcerated people sign dozens of forms each week (commissary, sick calls, debit memos, classifications, etc.) and different paper forms contribute to vibrations and moving walls. Administrative classification forms create the worst vibrations. When a person receives these papers, their breath quickens, making the walls move faster and inward. Many times, their anger and panic rises not only as a result of potential correctional ramifications for write-ups, but also because their body feels worse as a result of unsettling mobilities. They cannot control how their body reacts, and often worry that they are alone in these feelings, though they also know that this cannot possibly be true. Correctional paper practices manufacture collective individuals who then agonize over the possibility that they feel their worlds in less Human ways. Their movements are only their own in the sense that they have been made to feel them, because they have no control over when correctional papers can pop up, and incarcerated people never truly know when staff will write them up for an infraction. Worse, not all staff follow the same protocols,<sup>xvi</sup> making it extremely difficult for anyone to know which rules are rigid and which only exist ‘on paper.’ Mr. Ares, an Afro-Brazilian man incarcerated at a Level III unit for nine years explains:

These officers [COs] can write us up for any reason. You [referring to the researcher] can write me up for any reason, or get someone to do it. I know this



one dude who got wrote up for jerking it in his cell. They called it self-abuse. Man, everyone does that shit. All that was, was an excuse to write up a convict they don't like. But they don't understand what those write-ups do. That paper adds to your points and everything, but it also makes you feel like shit. Almost like that paper has the power to lock you up longer.

These papers do not just represent the State or punishing movements. To DEF captives, these papers *are* the State and they *are* movement. Their muscles contract, their breath labors, and their bones ache. They cannot control these feelings just as they cannot control the materials and the State around them.

Papers do not come to life in the same manner as walls and floors, but they do violently vibrate until destroyed. As a result, many perceive of them as objects that can purposefully cause harm. These materials, like the State, purposefully cause pain until captives reach a breaking point. They scream and tear apart the papers hoping to end the vibrations and slow the ache in their bones. As Mr. Samson explains:

I rip the shit out of that paper to make the vibrating stop. Those things have to be destroyed for me to get any calm in my life. Sometimes you do need to keep ripping them up until there's just tiny pieces left. It makes me feel better to know that I can stop them from piling up in my cell...It's strange though because there's all this movement around me and I'm just stuck in this cell...Even when you destroy the papers, everything else vibrates anyway. It's not as bad as them papers though.

When Mr. Samson says that it makes him feel better to stop "them" from piling up in his cell, he is not just referring to "inanimate" papers or worrying about clutter. "Them" refers to the State and all the people who lock him up without a worry for how much pain it causes him. For many incarcerated people, destroying State papers is an act of destroying the State itself.

But, for Mr. Samson, the State is not a monolithic entity that functions with one purpose:

I think about all these people working to harm me. There's corrections, of course, but there's also paper pushers and bureaucrats who kind of do what they want a lot of the time. I expect the worst from them because they get paid for this. What really gets me going is how all those people "out there" [outside the prison

compound] know we are locked up and they are totally fine with it...There's an evilness to that. But they just go about their day as if everything is normal.

Without reading, but taking a page from, Akhil Gupta (2012), Mr. Samson argues that States are made up of people who don't work with the same intentions, though intentions don't matter if the outcomes create pain and suffering for people such as himself. He also shrewdly observes how people who do not live on a prison compound ignore the evils being done in their name and with their complicity.<sup>xvii</sup> He despises State workers, but judges everyday citizens more harshly because they don't even lock him up for the money. From his perspective, as wrapped in capitalistic frameworks as it is, State workers are just doing their job because the larger public demands it. For Mr. Samson and most of his brethren, the State is everyone who is not or has never been forced to live in a prison.

In sum, because DEF captives understand classification papers as the State itself, paper takes on new meanings and feelings for them. These materials do not just signify or represent a State, but rather, they are the very people, with all their intentions, that make up the State itself. In destroying their classification papers – the very materials that turn captives from embodied beings to paper peoples – they tear apart the those who do violence to them. It quiets their breath and the ache in their bones. This act of destruction is a power move in that men and women demand to create their own identities and desire to take some control over their lives. Where narratives of precision generate decontextualized images and life histories utilizing paper, incarcerated people upend these narratives by destroying the very materials and people that perpetuate violence against them. Unfortunately, destroying classification papers might make materials stop vibrating, but their bodies already feel their worlds anew.

## **Mobility Matters**

Mr. Thomas felt the sunlight burn the back of his neck as he kneeled to pick up a few pieces of trash the correctional officer had purposefully thrown to the ground. He didn't get angry about the CO's actions because it gave him something to do. Working on his sanitation detail allowed him to be outside more than other men and he was not going to allow one CO's actions to bother him. He continued to sweep dirt off the walkways and into the small, rectangle openings cut into the concrete. He smiled as he completed this task and felt a sense of accomplishment waft over him. As he looked up towards the cloudless sky, squinting in the brightness of the sun, he heard a commotion coming from his unit door. As the wind smashed into fences creating loud jangly noises, he turned to see CO Hernandez holding something small in his hand and looking distraught. He moved closer until the CO looked up with a glare that made it perfectly clear to the captive that he should not come any closer. But from this distance Mr. Thomas could see the CO was holding a baby bird that had probably fallen out of a nest just above the unit entrance. Clearly upset about the bird's inevitable death, CO Hernandez looked softly at the creature, while Mr. Thomas tried to keep rage bursting from his body.

DEF captives at the Desert Echo Facility asked that I pay attention to how "they lock us up and lock us down" to understand exactly what their incarceration entails. As exhibited in the introduction and with examples in this chapter, the DEF architecturally marks physical movement as a central means of control – most people live inside individual cells and everyday relations and materials, from concrete to paper, restrict their physical movement as a form of punishment. But Mr. Ruiz pointed out that locking people down in these ways and with these materials is not just about controlling movement or restricting access to relations of all kinds. Mobility at the DEF entails amplifying particular relationships that often challenge cosmological

preconceptions in detrimental ways to those already most vulnerable in the facility. These men and women ask us to pay attention because they believe no one looks their way or tries to understand what they endure. Correctional workers do not feel incarcerated peoples' worlds, and non-imprisoned individuals cannot possibly imagine what incarceration feels like in this context. To pay attention is not an angry demand, though their anger is understandable, but rather a plea for understanding and empathy.

With all the scholarly imaginings of *everything* suddenly being queerly alive (Munoz 2015), anthropologists must grapple with what counts as alive and how this feels in different contexts. For DEF captives, destabilizing cosmologies is not as romantic as many academics wish it to be. In fact, it can be violently disrupting for their relationships and their bodies. While correctional workers unevenly implement penal policies and practices that center on controlling and restricting physical movement, they do so in ways that amplify undesirable unsettling mobilities to torturous effects. For many incarcerated people, walls moving signifies aliveness at the exact moments their physical movement becomes constrained and constricted. When movement signifies aliveness, it may be understandable why some people feel as if they are being pushed down an animacy hierarchy while questioning what their worlds mean and their place within them. In an idyllic world, captives situate atop a natural order where alive Subjects like themselves are mobile, while all other Objects remain immobile, or have their movements controlled. For these men and women, mobility matters more than ever.

This chapter opened with Mr. Thomas feeling a bird hop around metal fences just outside his window. His walls began to move and his forehead produced sweat as time slowed. But he managed these feelings by writing letters and attempting to maintain a world that had been radically altered from his previous one, demonstrating that DEF captives do not just exist as

tortured bodies or people incapable of refashioning mobility. They create new practices and feelings that generate novel relationships, an idea that I turn to in chapter five. But incarcerated people are not alone on the prison compound. Correctional staff work long hours and live amongst the captives for a large portion of their days. These workers directly control incarcerated peoples' movements even as this work damages their own bodies and relationships. More troubling for Mr. Thomas, a dying bird caused a CO a moment of sympathy not usually offered to someone like himself. If mobility matters, we must now look to the labor involved in constantly managing mobility and the consequences for doing so.

### **Chapter 3** **Masculine Hysteria: Dirty Work and Gendered Touch**

Mr. Ponce took a deep breath as he heard the familiar buzz signal its approval for entrance. He opened the gate, the cold metal sending a shudder throughout his body, and moved toward the prison unit where he would spend the next eight hours. He tried to prepare himself for the mandatory overtime that could hit him at any moment, turning an eight-hour shift into 16, but he couldn't muster the strength today. As he opened the prison unit door, his body knew what to do: his eyes scanned every area and inmate within sight, his chest pushed out like a frog readying to croak, his spine straightened, and his heart tightened. These feelings would not dissipate until he left the compound, and even then, his body might not return to normal until a few hours into rest. But this was the price of protecting society. He is a correctional officer (CO), and his job requires a vigilance that most cannot fathom.

He made his way to the security center overlooking three separate chambers that housed 16 inmates in two tiers. He greeted his work partner, Mr. Martín, and began preparing for his hourly rounds where he would make sure that all inmates remained in the required areas. Inmates needed constant supervision and rigid schedules because their movement proved dangerous time and again. He made sure his belt clicked tightly around his waist before proceeding down the stairs and entering the first chamber. He heard a click-sound echo around him before the mechanized door opened, scraping along the concrete floor. While he entered the inmates' living areas, Mr. Martín stayed in the security center to press a computer mouse to control the facility doors, held down large, white buttons on an old machine to open cells, and aimed a rifle loaded with rubber bullets or bean bags towards the chamber. For his part, Mr. Ponce walked by every cell, pulled on the doors to make sure the inmates were locked inside, checked the area for signs of impending violence or contraband, and counted every inmate he passed. When he finished

these tasks, he returned to the security center to log his movement and actions on a daily form and prepared to reconduct these rounds in one hour. He knew that he and his partner would be off schedule by a few minutes, but the routine had to be maintained. Mr. Martín would click the buttons and aim the rifle while he would move throughout the facility ensuring the inmates remained under their control.

He heard birds chirping outside the unit and wished for fresh air, but he knew that his duties required him to be inside for another three hours before leaving the post. As he waited out the clock, he worried that today would be the day the inmates finally got to him – either with their cutting words or physical violence. Three years into the job and only a few years out of high school, Mr. Ponce feared that this work would be the only opportunity available to him. Worse, he knew that everyone around him thought he was only capable of being a correctional officer. He smirked at this notion when remembering how badly he wanted this job just a short time ago. He had scoffed at the minimum wage employment options slowly obliterating his peers' ambitions. He had bigger dreams. He would enter law enforcement with a completed political science Bachelor's degree and secure a better future for himself and his daughter. But he couldn't afford everyday living expenses, let alone child support, on \$7.25 an hour. Understanding this predicament, he followed a friend's advice and applied to be a CO at a prison located almost an hour from his home. His starting pay would be approximately \$33,000 annually, enough to start a life that many of his friends could only dream of. His daughter would have the best clothes, and all those who doubted him would finally see his true potential. But these dreams now seemed ridiculous because of the demanding work hours, the public's disdain for correctional workers, and his increasing awareness that this job could kill him before he reached 60 years old.

He sat on a squeaky chair awaiting the next scheduled duty and closed his eyes. He listened for any signs of danger: scuffling shoes, metal clinking, loud voices. When he first began working at the DEF, he had been surprised how much he relied upon sound. But sight was still important. He tried to observe inmates continuously to make sure they were not touching each other or workers inappropriately. A handshake and fist bump between inmates were acceptable (and nothing else), but staff should never touch a captive. This job required him to listen for danger, observe social relations to ensure appropriate interactions ensued, and fill out multiple sheets of paperwork on a daily basis. He hoped the inmates didn't act up today because that meant more paperwork and stress. A fight broke out three days prior to this shift, and he was forced to shoot pepper spray into an inmate's eyes, handcuff their wrists, and escort them to Segregation.<sup>xviii</sup> He used to enjoy the action: hearing the handcuffs click and knowing he had full control over the inmate in his custody. But the paperwork was out of control.

At least he fully understood these inmates' true natures. They were the dregs of society and offered nothing to the world. Mr. Ponce often became enraged when he thought about how much education and medical care these inmates received for free. They didn't deserve anything, let alone tax-payer subsidized programming. The inmates are shifty and often hide their true natures from those around them. They lie and deceive workers, trying to show that they're Human when, in fact, they're far from it. They can sense weakness around them, helping them to use and destroy the people closest to them. They must be controlled at all costs. Inmates often tried to shake his hand or catch him in conversation, but he wisely maneuvered around their attempts to get closer. He had witnessed many correctional staff fall and that was not going to happen to him. He shuddered at the thought of inmates moving freely out in the world. He knew the state would release most of them, but he didn't understand how any inmate could ever be



trusted to move freely in society. He slept better at night knowing that prisons controlled their movement, even though he knew the DEF needed to implement even stricter rules. Mr. Ponce opened his eyes to look at his watch and prepared for the next hourly round. He worried he didn't have the stamina to make it through the rest of the day. In that moment, he thought about his daughter. She needed him to be strong and constantly aware of his surroundings. She needed to live in a society where inmates remained in their cells. And she needed him to stay alive.

### **Dying Young**

Most DEF correctional workers assumed my research began from a biased perspective that favored incarcerated people. One prison educator even asked me how I could conduct fieldwork when I clearly had naïve assumptions about 'inmates' and could not fully understand their true natures. Many staff ignored or actively avoided me, mocked my perceived sexuality or femininity, and complained to upper management when they felt I was acting inappropriately. Most troubling, some COs acted as literal gatekeepers who would not open mechanized fences in order to keep me from entering prison units. I moved through the facility knowing I was under constant scrutiny and that any mistake, no matter how small, would serve as an excuse to permanently expel me from the compound. I always tried to remember that I was not imprisoned at the DEF and that whining about these discomforts demonstrated a privilege that incarcerated people sorely lacked. Still, I often displayed annoyance and outright frustration with many correctional workers for treating me with a level of disdain for which I was not fully prepared.

While my frustrations grew from constant correctional worker distrust, their fears about my presence repeatedly proved true. I had come to the DEF to conduct ethnographic fieldwork with incarcerated people and had mostly ignored correctional staff in all aspects of my project design. Worse, I feared correctional workers, especially COs and other security personnel, so

much that I did not want to speak with or include them in my research at all. I arrived with many assumptions about the work prison staff carried out, and believed that I did not need their input. After all, they perform the enslavement tasks required for everyday prison life to continue. I made no excuses for my supposed sympathies for incarcerated people, as foolhardy as this seems now. But DEF captives didn't need my sympathy, nor did they need someone making their lives worse by riling up correctional workers with my condescending presence.

My ignorance did not become apparent to me until a CO died in his home due to 'natural causes.' COs openly mourned his death and comforted each other even though administrators expected them to fulfill their daily work requirements. At first, I likened the compassion to the outpouring of grief when a police officer died, and stewed with anger about how captors always feel the loss of each other while ignoring the pain they cause. It was in these moments of self-satisfaction that five correctional officers mourning in front of the prison entrance caught my attention. They stood in a circle, looking at the concrete, with wisps of cigarette smoke slowly disappearing with the desert wind. They spoke few words, but pain emanated from their presence, though an occasional joke or two about how dying would at least mean an escape from working in a prison interrupted the quiet. One CO inhaled deeply and flicked his cigarette as he moved his eyes from the ground to a roadrunner meandering in the distance. "He was one year from retiring. It's not right," he whispered. The COs grumbled a conversation about how most officers seemed to die right before or immediately after they retire, even though most retire from correctional labor by their early 50s. The others briefly discussed how correctional work kills them quietly and that most people refuse to pay attention to their problems. One man, slightly choked up, muttered that no one cares about correctional work, so it should come as no surprise that no one expresses concern when workers die.

I moved away from them to make sure I didn't cause any unnecessary stress and made my way through two security checkpoints only to meet another CO on my way to the third. He asked me if I'd heard about the death and when I replied that I had, he told me that the average life-span for an officer was 55 years. Stunned, I asked him if he worries about dying young. He responded that dying young doesn't worry him as much as having people think that he's no different than the captives. "Those things in there," he began while pointing towards the units, "they don't serve any purpose. We have to take care of them, feed them, and cater to their every need. And management, they side with them most of the time. What you should be paying attention to is how COs do all this work, die early, and somehow maintain our humanity around these monsters. It kills you." While I sympathized with this CO's worries, there is no conclusive evidence that correctional officers die by the age of 55, though multiple State-based studies assert that they die earlier than the average person. F. Cheek and M.D.S. Miller (1982) found the average life expectancy of a CO to be 59 years. A study of Florida correctional officers found the average age of a COs' death to be 62.4 years (see Parker 2011). A Rhode Island Corrections Union president also claimed that the average CO lives to the age of 58.<sup>xix</sup> However, more skeptical investigations have found flaws with these studies, arguing that their data indicates COs do not die earlier than 'average' workers and that these assertions are designed to increase correctional funding and lower retirement ages (see the Evaluation Branch of the Correctional Service of Canada 2015 and Emery, Jr. 2011). While there continues to be dispute about the average age of COs' deaths, it is clear that most officers at the Desert Echo Facility believe they will die before the age of 60.

In this chapter, I argue that correctional movement restrictions at the Desert Echo Facility demonstrate staff's hatred of women and the desire to control gender. I provide evidence that

DEF correctional officers feel tainted by the work they perform because their bodies are the sites of mobility controls. With ‘mobility controls’, I utilize aspects of Judith Butler’s (2004:19) take on Foucault’s concept of regulatory power. Regulatory power “acts upon a preexisting Subject” but also helps to shape that same Subject, meaning that these constructed Subjects come into being by ways of regulatory power. In the DEF context, mobility controls come in the form of regulating gender via physical movement – a power that not only controls and produces Subjects, but also creates new correctional bodies. In attempting to curtail and maintain specific movement practices based upon gendered bodily assumptions, correctional officers recreate and reconfigure the CO body in a masculinized image while simultaneously emphasizing the inherent femininity of the captive body. In so doing, COs attempt to create the ideal Human: A man that moves without restriction who controls his personal movements and everyone, and everything, else’s physical movement as well. These mobility controls do not create simplistic peoples that follow premade paths, but instead, are utilized by COs to produce specific, yet historical, gendered expectations and actions. Correctional officers collect and analyze mobility data through sight, sound and touch, and in doing so, find themselves physically and socially “too close” to their captives. Attempting to convince themselves that they are distinct from the people they oversee, they create affective caricatures of incarcerated people and correctional workers. Many male correctional officers believe that captives, as beings hierarchically similar to women, must be punished by restricting their movements and they assume that they are the only individuals allowed to wield violence. When these assumptions prove false, COs worry that their movement is also controlled within the prison, which threatens their masculinity. Male COs then emphasize masculinized mobility controls to administer prison policies in attempts to exert their manhood over feminized populations. As men working in the prison utilize these gendered constructions in

their daily work, they place all incarcerated people hierarchically beneath them and on the same level as women. Most DEF captives identify as men, so from many COs' perspectives, this action serves to further punish men by feminizing them while simultaneously buttressing officers' own fragile masculinities. In doing so, COs attempt to create the ideal Man: A being that moves without restriction and has the power to wield violence. This hatred of women at the DEF informs how staff enact mobility controls, demonstrating the belief that to punish a man, you must treat him as a woman.

It is also important to note right from the start that though DEF correctional officers suffer because of their labor they also find enjoyment in their work and form life-long relationships with some of their fellow COs. Many officers laugh with each other throughout their shift, often joking about their family lives, television programming, and their work duties. Many other COs bond over sports, usually football games, and hang out with each other on weekends to watch a game, go to bars and clubs after work, and carpool to their job site. Many male COs actively pursue other staff, mostly women, for sexual intercourse and openly discuss which workers they would like to "fuck," who they are in love with, and which workers believe COs are not good enough to date (though these conversations are often dripping with sexist assumptions). Female COs often speak with each other about their children, joke about how scared and incompetent the male staff are, whom they find attractive, and with whom they would like to have, or have already had, sexual relations. Many COs play games throughout their day, complete crossword puzzles, take small naps, and watch television shows or listen to sports on contraband cell phones and portable televisions. COs are much more than their suffering and the gendered violence they perform, but I center these specific feelings and actions in this dissertation. The pain they feel is often ignored or rendered invisible due to the rural locations of

prisons, and silence about these issues persists largely due to masculine performativity. And the violence they enact often remains a secret due to the fact that most people do not have access to DEF daily life. While I attempt to add texture and create complex portraits of COs, their suffering and gendered actions remain front and center. The feelings that many male COs shared with me either through words or actions demonstrate their antiquated beliefs about gender and bodily movements. They construct seemingly simplistic hierarchies between the categories of man and woman but also create complex rationales for their gendered concerns and feelings. The analysis in this chapter focuses on these constructed hierarchies in order to explain and scrutinize, not endorse, the sexism and misogyny that many of these men create.

Finally, I want to make a quick note about the title “Masculine Hysteria.” I purposely chose the word hysteria due to its long history of being weaponized against women by marking them as hyperemotional beings defined by their bodies. While these assertions come wrapped in nonsense, enlightenment era conceptions about objectivity and rationality, I still use this word hysteria to turn the tables a bit and show how men at the DEF often demonstrate the exact characteristics they claim make women inferior.

### **Dirty Mobility Work and the Correctional Body**

Mr. Alvarado hated the Desert Echo Facility. The locked gates and burdensome schedule made him want to drink. Entering his 13th year as a correctional officer and only in his mid-30s, he felt a familiar pain in his back, reminding him that this job destroyed his liver. The constant overtime and claustrophobic sensations drove him to unhealthy levels of alcohol consumption and he now ingested multiple pills every day to fight early signs of cirrhosis. As the pain subsided, he locked eight inmates in a cage for their monthly gym time and tried not to let them see how much he hurt. If they sensed any weakness, they would attack. These inmates smell

frailty like he could sniff out an alcoholic beverage. He held his breath and moved into the middle of the yard so he could observe three inmate cages simultaneously. The razor-wire atop the fences glistened in the morning sun bringing forth memories of shiny metal in the Iraqi desert where the marines stationed him for two years. He heard the familiar sounds of rubber balls slamming against concrete and palms<sup>xx</sup> as he hoped today would be uneventful.

As gym time ended, he moved with the inmates back to their IV security units to begin his next shift, carefully watching how fast they moved, whom they got close to, and their gait. As he locked them into their cells, many inmates cracked jokes about his large frame and dark skin, and he shot back a few lines about how they must really desire him if they look at him so much. He learned a long time ago that joking about the inmates' insults usually ended the mockery, though many COs never seemed to learn this important lesson. But even as he joked with them, he never forgot that they presented a constant danger, so he ensured every cell was locked. The things in these cages needed to be locked down for as long as possible because once they gained free movement all hell would break loose.

He walked to the security center in the unit and sat with his brother-in-law, who also worked as a CO in the facility. He liked that he had family working with him because they often passed the time by speaking with each other about their wives, plans for the weekend, and life goals. He smiled at his brother-in-law and immediately began filling out his paperwork: a daily log form where he timestamped his rounds, inmate movements, and skirmishes. With every pen stroke his chest tightened as he thought about what the inmates could do. His body also ached from cirrhosis and from daily correctional stress, making him wish he could leave. But he knew he was trapped in this environment, though he tried to tell himself that he wasn't an inmate. They deserved to be locked in here, and he understood how important it was to make sure they didn't

come into contact with anyone or anything they could harm. Their movement was dangerous, and COs felt that inmates were capable of extreme violence. Inmate lives didn't really matter, even if they had loved ones back home. But what interrupted his minimal sleep, drove him to drink, and caused him to shout horrific language at the ones he loved most was the thought that he was just like the inmates. Sure, he could leave the DEF at the end of his shift, but he was locked inside these walls day after day. Like the inmates his language grew coarse and he often held back strong urges to physically lash out at everyone around him. But he would not fall. He was stronger and more Human than every inmate under his command. These inmates needed to be physically and socially immobilized. After all, they're in here for a reason.

Throughout their labor routines, DEF correctional workers lock people in cages and shackles, patrol the prison grounds, fill out daily forms and write-up sheets, listen for danger, watch for inappropriate touch, and restrict access to the compound. This mobility work challenges staff to maintain rigid schedules while attempting to preserve a sense of humanity they feel slipping away with each passing day. While correctional officers perform most security measures on the compound, prison officials require all staff to ensure that incarcerated people remain under constant supervision. Educators, medical workers, and administrative personnel receive training from State correctional employees that emphasize workers' roles in maintaining control. This translates to all staff paying close attention to with whom they speak and share humor, ensuring they participate in proper discussion topics, knowing who and what is appropriate for touch, controlling all access points, and maintaining proper physical and emotional distance from incarcerated people.

Correctional staff perform what Everett Hughes (1951) calls 'dirty work' – societal labor considered physically, morally, or socially tainted that wounds employee dignity because it runs



counter to heroic narratives or moral conceptions (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999). ‘Dirty workers’ carry out tasks that many people view as shameful, disgusting, and degrading, including but not limited to preparing dead bodies for burial, handling waste products, performing domestic and sex work, and coming into repeated contact with stigmatized populations (Ackroyd and Crowdy 1990; Maticka-Tyndale et al. 2000; Murphy 2003; Rambo Ronai 1992; Perry 1998; Tracy 2004, 2005; Twigg 2000). Some anthropologists have extended Hughes’ concept by providing ethnographic evidence for how different contexts produce unique feelings about what counts as dirty, disgusting, polluted, and undesirable (Douglas 1966; Stoller 1997). Within correctional environments, prison staff find themselves navigating the stigma of working with incarcerated people as a result of labor deemed physically disgusting (escorting individuals to the bathroom and conducting strip searches), socially tainted (servile work for disappeared peoples), and morally questionable (sadistic assumptions about prison workers) (Tracy 2004).

According to most prison administrators, maintaining order remains the enduring problem across correctional compounds (Cullen 1989; Hepburn 1985; Sparks et al. 1996; Sykes 1958). As Mr. Tanner, a Caucasian administrator in his early 50s informed me:

This place only runs if everyone does exactly what they’re supposed to do. Inmates have to stay where they’re supposed to and officers need to make sure they do just that...COs have to keep on top of this situation because once inmates run loose, they have control of the facility. We cannot lose control of this place. You only remain safe inside these walls because COs keep order. Without that, I’d hate to think what would happen. Well we know what would happen: a riot.

Maintaining order requires prison staff to scrutinize incarcerated people’s physical movement – from their gait and speed to their location – and their relationships, all while performing dozens of mobility controls. Mr. Martín must press a computer mouse or facility control buttons hundreds of times each day to open and close mechanized doors or gates. He also stands with a gun pointing towards his assigned prison unit worried he may have to use it. Mr. Ponce walks the

halls of the unit, closes and locks doors, yells at captives to stay where they're supposed to, frisks people, and fills out forms that note movement. Both men conduct these tasks while constantly listening for sounds of impending violence – scuffling shoes, raised voices, metal clinking – echoing around them. This work proves exhausting for most COs because the actions required to control movement produces a bodily habitus that many COs do not expect: pressing buttons, necks stiff with attention as they listen for sounds of threat, breath constricting as they imagine impending danger, bodies weighted with batons and protective vests that provide officers with slow and deliberate footsteps. Complicating matters, many security staff feel that if they make a bodily mistake then they will be responsible for disrupting the scheduled safety of the prison environment. Most COs falter under this habitus, even as they double-down on notions of order within the compound.

Keeping order requires COs to maintain bodily positions of suspicion throughout their shift that cause many personnel to develop collective temperaments similar to police officers, such as hypervigilance and feelings of social isolation (Skolnick 1966). In the context of many prison environments, suspicion has become associated with an action readiness that manifests perpetual bodily stimuli (Frijda 1993). Worse, DEF officers repeatedly informed me that they could not always control how their body reacts as a result of working in a prison. Mr. Gujerda, a 42-year-old Mexican-American CO of nine years, advises:

You have to constantly be watching what these inmates are doing. Who they're talking to, what they're talking about, where they're going, what's in their hand. You never have a moment's peace in this place and it wears you out. I'm tired all the time. Some of that has to be from the mandatory overtime, but I think a lot of it is from being so vigilant about every fucking thing around you. There are some days that my heart beats so fast that I worry I'm going to have a heart attack. I hate this place, and I hate those inmates. But I need this job.

Ms. Cortes, a Caucasian CO of more than 15 years in her forties, adds:

Sometimes it's just too much. I have to watch the inmates, listen for danger and to my radio, try to feel if the room is about to turn on me. Most days I can't feel like myself in here. I like to joke with everyone and I instinctively nurture other people. I try not to do that with these inmates though. I can't get too close. They'll use it against you. That, and other COs won't trust you if you get too friendly with inmates... There are times in here where I worry that I lose a piece of myself because of this job.

DEF correctional officers suffer from the work they perform even though many actively believe the work is necessary for the safety of the compound and the larger society. Mr. Gujerda's heart beats uncontrollably during his work shift and Ms. Cortes worries she loses "a piece of herself" while being in a constant state of suspicion. Many COs compared hearts beating uncontrollably to a person sitting on them and beating them in the chest. Their ears flooded with echoes of drumbeats that seemed to shake their heads and vibrate their skulls. And losing a piece of oneself was often compared to losing a piece of one's body such as a limb. Most people were not worried about losing their identities, but rather, their bodies.

Prison security personnel bear the most responsibility for the control of incarcerated people even though their work often goes unmentioned and unacknowledged by the public (Bowker 1980; Liebling 2000). They are outnumbered and constantly worry about violent victimization, all while believing themselves to be acting as the first line of defense for prison order and policy implementation (Crewe 2011; Crewe et al. 2011; Gordon 2017; Kauffman 1988; Lin 2000; Lipsky 1980; Schaufeli and Peeters 2000; Sparks et al. 1996). The pressure to perform all their duties leads to high stress levels that create physical consequences, such as anxiety, poor mental health, and addiction, as well as job burnout, negative job satisfaction, and feelings of isolation (Cullen et al. 1985; Dowden and Tellier 2004; Griffin 2001; Lambert et al. 2007; Schaufeli and Peeters 2000; Stichman and Gordan 2015; Taxman and Gordon 2009).

These daily consequences of penal work leave COs feeling overwhelmed and underappreciated. Worse, as Mr. Gujerda and Ms. Cortes attest, their bodies bear the burden of their underpaid labor.

Many COs feel, and have been trained to believe, that they have an obligation to maintain a constant state of suspicion about everyone and everything around them. This securitized habitus marks COs as perpetual officers who often rely on their bodies as instruments to maintain order or sense impending violence. Mr. Ponce explains:

You can feel when something's about to go down. Everything can just go quiet or you feel, like, a bad vibration in the room when you open the door. Your body senses the danger and you have to learn to listen to your body if you want to make it out of here alive every day...I can't explain exactly how it works, but COs have this like sixth sense or something. We feel when something's off and we act quickly...When I get that feeling, I have no problem locking down the unit because as long as they're locked down, they can't do whatever it is they're planning...We have to lock them down because they're in here for a reason.

Mr. Alvarado adds:

Everything feels heavy, like you're walking through water. My legs feel like I'm moving against waves and the air feels too thick to breathe right. When I get that feeling, I know something is about to go down and I need to be extra ready...My heart feels like it's pounding and I'm pretty trigger-happy in those moments. The worst thing is that I can't stop feeling like that even when I go home. I'll be sitting at home trying to remember how to breathe right and getting angrier and angrier because I still don't feel right.

For DEF COs, their bodily senses are the instruments by which mobility controls operate. They utilize sight for observing movement, sound for impending violence, and touch to make sure doors and gates are secure. These sensory practices serve to create the sixth sense that Mr. Ponce cannot explain. CO bodies, in a habitus of suspicion, gauge movement so intently that they can feel when incarcerated people are planning a supposed attack. These feelings manifest in bodily vibrations – often caused by the echoes generated from architectural unit design and fast-paced

heartbeats – slow movements – produced by weighted uniforms and adrenaline – and feelings of inescapable enclosure.

Bodies have a long history of knowledge production in many euro-american contexts. Conducting self-experiments, researchers have used the body as a sensory investigative tool to understand radiation poisoning, endemic diseases, and even alcohol consumption (Kucklick 2008; Mehra 2009; Weston 2017). But people from many walks of life use their bodies as measuring instruments, as Kath Weston (2017:111) makes clear:

From the period of medieval Islamic science through the heyday of natural philosophy in early modern Europe, researchers routinely enlisted the body as a sensing and measuring device. The eye did not simply see; it registered changes in what me might now call ‘data.’ The nose did not simply smell; it gauged acidity. The fingers might touch, but in doing so they could also render judgments about granular fineness... When placed in the service of scientific investigation, the body’s senses can become a sensory *apparatus* as integral to obtaining results as any crucible, astrolabe, or barometer.

Officers’ bodies collect data about incarcerated peoples’ movements, creating notions of safety and violence within the compound. Their eyes assemble mobility data about people’s movement and relationships. CO ears listen for mobile auditory dangers. And their fingers touch materials that hold people captive. The correctional body senses incarceration and creates data through the dirty work of everyday mobility controls. For most DEF staff, ‘dirty work’ is mobility work.

### **Constructing the Correctional Officer**

State sanctioned training programs create the correctional officer through regimented programming and mobility controls. Prospective correctional officers, known in prison lingo as cadets, must participate in training programs (up to 90 days depending on the work position) where they reside with other cadets in a militaristic, bunk-style building. Cadets have to march in lockstep, pass physical stamina tests, exceed handcuffing and light combat standards, and experience being tased and pepper-sprayed. All of these trainings prepare COs’ bodies to move

at regimented speeds and perform particular movements in an effort to create and naturalize specific bodily feelings about mobility. These trainings center mobility and serve as a form of regulatory power that simultaneously “acts upon” an already formed Subject, while also producing the correctional officers themselves. In other words, mobility is both generative and objectified. All of the CO training movements occur while they yell callbacks to their instructor whom they refer to by their title, such as Lieutenant or Sergeant. Once cadets pass this phase of the training program, along with a criminal background check and drug screening, they must also do well on a polygraph test, psychological exam (often consisting of 300+ questions), and agree to fingerprinting. The final phase requires medical examinations to ensure all cadets meet the minimum health requirements for the position.<sup>xxi</sup> Similar to military preparations (see Hinojosa 2010), correctional trainings turn personnel entering prison facilities into cadets whose bodies serve as both instruments of mobility measurement and security. Ms. Tapia, a Mexican-American woman in her 40s and working as a DEF CO for over ten years, explains:

When I was training, I had to wake up early in the morning and run all these fucking miles. It was terrible. [pointing to herself] *Gorda*,<sup>xxii</sup> you know. I also had to wrestle all these smelly-ass men and get sprayed in the face. I didn't like that shit...They used to yell at me and get in my face. I worried that I wasn't nothing when I was in there. You know, like where did I belong? But it made us stronger and prepared us for these inmates. We have to be stronger than these fuckers because they're always trying to get over on us...We went in normal civilians and came out COs able to handle the worst of the worst.

Ms. Tapia provides a clear Turnerian (1964) explanation for the creation of the correctional officer. She left civilian life behind (literally separated from her kin and housed with other prospective COs) and became a cadet upon entering training. As a cadet, she endured a number of trials and had to pass each task to become a CO. Once she completed her training, she was so fully transformed that she speaks of her time before becoming a CO in the singular and her life after training in the plural. She uses “I” statements to talk about how she felt during the

training, but “We” once she exits. She is no longer a singular civilian. She is a plural correctional officer.

These trainings also produce the correctional officer by preparing them to handle “the worst of the worst.” Along with the other forms of training described above, cadets sit in classrooms for multiple days watching videos of incarcerated people from all across the united states performing horrific acts of violence. As an educator, and later a researcher, in prisons, administrators required that I watch these same videos. The electronic media showed captives repeatedly stabbing and assaulting their cohort and correctional staff. Recordings also displayed individuals spitting and kicking at anyone nearby, running themselves into walls, and seemingly not being affected by tear gas and rubber bullets. Accompanying these demonstrations, facilitators explain that incarcerated people may not feel things like normal humans. Some people can withstand pepper spray, stabbings, and severe beatings, and all captives are highly manipulative, or so the story goes. They openly state that captives will use whatever they can to exploit staff weaknesses. One trainer, who allowed me to use their words as long as I did not describe them, explained that “Inmates are highly manipulative and must be locked down for everyone’s safety. The more they move around, the more damage they can cause. If we let them go anywhere they want, they could speak with anyone they want. That’s trouble.” When I pressed, they continued, “Inmates can’t be trusted. You can never know what they’re planning to do. And you know they’re always planning something...Some workers need to be constantly reminded that they’re not like you and me. They’re missing something important. Even if you don’t believe me, you should remember that they committed a crime and that’s the reason they’re in here.” These video training sessions serve as digitized narratives of precision that turn incarcerated people into violence itself. Administrators do not show videos of the mundane acts

throughout everyday correctional life. Workers watch only spectacular acts of violence that influence how they perceive people and prison environments. It should come as no surprise that workers exhibit deep suspicion of all captives and feel as if they are surrounded by constant threat of violence.

Once trained, correctional officers' bodily dirty work informs everyday social relations by creating what Brian Massumi (2010) terms "affective facts." Affective facts manifest as a result of perceived threats that create bodily feelings of preemption. Massumi (2010: 53) writes:

Threat is from the future. It is what might come next. Its eventual location and ultimate extent are undefined. Its nature is open-ended. It is not just that it is not: it is not in a way that is never over...The uncertainty of the potential next is never consumed in any given event. There is always a remainder of uncertainty, an unconsummated surplus of danger...The future of threat is forever.

But facts are always decontextualized objects made legitimate through enculturated knowledge productions (Tsoukas 1997). In other words, facts are born of power. In DEF contexts, staff legitimate affective facts because they can never fully be proven false: any incarcerated person can potentially threaten a worker or the larger society in the future. Even if this threat doesn't manifest specific forms of violence, the threat is still felt in the correctional body. The body makes it real. Most COs feel incarcerated people as threat at the level of habitus. Many cannot explain why captives pose a constant and potential threat. They just know it, or rather, feel it. These affective facts become real because correctional workers control movement with their bodies. As previously stated, they observe and control relational movements with their eyes, ears, and hands. The correctional body, already in a state of suspicion, becomes the site for mobility controls, a form of regulatory power, and manifests threats that may never come true. But the "future of threat is forever," meaning it has temporally always been and will always be. For captives, affective facts prove particularly dangerous because as people warehoused in



prison, workers already assume them to be dangerous. As clearly stated by many workers, they're in here for a reason.

Complicating matters, some incarcerated people do pose significant threats to DEF workers. As explained in chapter two, captives find their worlds upended when supposed inanimate materials begin moving, signifying aliveness. Disappeared and sliding down animacy hierarchies, many lash out at workers who they feel hold them hostage. Some also want to cause harm to anyone in the prison system. While spectacular acts of violence, such as stabbings and beatings leading to death, rarely occur, they do happen. This leads many DEF workers to worry that they could suffer some form of violence while laboring on the compound. Ms. Cortes explains:

You never really know what can happen when you set foot into this place. Someone could be gunning for you for any reason, or no reason, at all. I try to remember that inmates are incredibly dangerous. I don't want my kids to lose their mother. Everyone here needs to remember that they can never get too comfortable. If you forget for one moment where you are, that could be the end.

Correctional officers worry that everyday actions in the facility could lead to their death. While this fear has largely been overemphasized and manufactured, the feelings are real. And they feel them throughout their body. Every CO I spoke with commented about how incarcerated people could kill them at any moment. They speak to each other about past violence directed towards staff. They exist in a state of suspicion, viewing everything and everyone as potential threats. Many COs suffer from exhaustion and feelings of isolation. And physical violence does occur on the compound. The correctional officer body cannot maintain this state of being without suffering harsh consequences. Mr. Alvarado lives with early cirrhosis and Ms. Cortes feels a piece of her humanity slipping away. The weight of their uniforms, their duties, and their

overemphasized threats is too heavy. It's not surprising that they worry their average life-span will be under 60 years. The dirty mobility work is too much.

### **Stigmatic, Labored Touch**

Mr. Vega watched with deep disgust as Ms. Cortes shook the inmate's hand. He wondered how she could do such a thing and then reminded himself that women didn't always make rational choices. He followed Ms. Cortes to Unit Three, passing by her post as if he was just walking towards an assigned area. He didn't see her touch anyone else, but he understood that she needed to be scrutinized more closely. Women in this place always seem to fall, and even though married to another CO, she couldn't be fully trusted. After all, he has spent the last 15 years working in this prison, and he knew that women were constantly in danger of being assaulted by inmates and of getting too close to them. So many women took jobs here looking for a date. And it often began with a small touch that most people overlook. After all, what other reason would make a woman want to work in this environment?

Mr. Vega stretched his arms as far away from his body as he could reach, inhaled deeply, and let out a loud grumble as he prepared for the day. As a Sergeant, prison administrators tasked him with maintaining orderly movement throughout the compound, and he knew how important it was to keep these inmates under control. He locked gates and fences, observed all inmates moving across the compound, performed frisks and strip searches when necessary, and ensured that workers kept an appropriate distance from the inmates. As he headed back to his office, he watched a bird glide over two fences and briefly wished he could fly. Maybe then his feet wouldn't swell from standing all day and maybe he wouldn't feel so claustrophobic. He shut the door to his office, noting the time, and waited for the next round of movement to begin at the top

of the hour. He wrote a small note to himself as a reminder to ask around about Ms. Cortes and opened a tinfoil-wrapped burrito his wife had prepared for him the night before.

As he quickly ate his food, he thought of that bird again. Working in this prison made him feel like he was incarcerated as well. Sure, he could leave, but he spent so much of his time inside this compound. At this very moment, he sat in an office surrounded by locked fences and mechanized doors. Even after all these years he could not shake the confining feelings that troubled him about his work. Men weren't supposed to be caged. They were supposed to be free to move around and take up space. Sitting in this tiny room within the DEF compound angered him to the point that he suddenly felt nauseous. Only five more years until retirement, he reminded himself. The queasy feeling subsided a bit when he told himself that he was not an inmate. He wasn't like them. He was better than these Chesters.<sup>xxiii</sup> And he kept society safe by doing this work. He moved towards the office door, straightened his aching back, and remembered to pay close attention to the woman who touched the inmate.

When I began working as an educator at the DEF over six years ago, prison administrators told me that I should never touch an incarcerated person unless I was fighting for my life. I moved through the compound wary of every person's body because I kept thinking about the danger of touching them. Every worker shares this concern and goes to great lengths to avoid touching captives, even when conducting disciplinary practices such as medical exams, frisks, and strip searches. COs observe touches, all staff remain cognizant of their body's proximity to the captive, and visiting family members may not be able to touch their loved one at all. Few question this sensory concern, and I myself naturalized the fear of touch so much that I once rebuffed an incarcerated person who just found out his father died and needed an embrace. Captives are not to be touched for any reason other than discipline, I told myself.

When I began to ask questions about the fascination with touch, correctional workers throughout the facility informed me that touching could lead to inappropriate relationships. COs told me that this act opened a space for people to manipulate staff into bringing contraband into the facility. Educators advised that touching gave captives sexual ideas. And medical personnel informed that touch should only be utilized under the most professional standards during physical examinations. All staff, from COs to administrative workers, worried that touching incarcerated people could lead to contamination of all sorts – contagion and stigma being the biggest concerns. Most informing, many prison employees laughed at my foolish questions about why touch was such a big deal at the DEF. “Just don’t touch inmates,” Mr. Ponce stated. “They’ll get the wrong idea and so will everyone else.” Clearly, touch is a touchy subject on the prison compound.

Touch is a social product constructed through and alongside notions of what counts as body and sensation (Classen 2005). Most scholars of tactility begin from Merleau-Ponty’s (1945) phenomenological perspective that emphasizes the importance of disrupting the Cartesian mind/body split, in order to contribute to theories of perception, sensation, and systems of knowledge production. Within these epistemes, touch has often been historicized as the first sense to develop before and after birth, and as a sense that creates healing capabilities and emotional bonds through human physical proximity and communication (Field 2014; Rasmussen 2006). Narratives that touch has healing abilities, specifically laying hands on someone, can be found in the Egyptian Ebers Papyrus (1553 BCE), in ancient Greece where Asclepius – the god of healing – cured by touch (400 BCE), and in some Christian New Testament texts where Jesus healed lepers and other sickly people by placing his hands on their bodies (see Field 2014). In

these contexts, touch, when applied correctly, changed damaged or dying bodies into rejuvenated persons (see Turner 1996).

In many euro-american contexts, the power of touch lost much of its healing, divine, and supernatural powers in the late seventeenth century (excluding one major caveat) with enlightenment notions that the body could not be trusted to accurately measure, let alone heal, in the same manner as “scientific” instruments (Classen 2005). Touch couldn’t be fully trusted, and, in some cases, it was outright dangerous, especially to economic elites’ interests. As capitalist expansions erased common lands used by people for animal husbandry and to forage for food,<sup>xxiv</sup> women who used public areas to curate healing herbs and food rations presented a problem for ruling classes. They often ignored trespassing claims as many in their communities continued to seek out their healing expertise. Monarchs and other royals targeted these women for financial and proprietary gain. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (quoted in Flanders 2014) explains:

The oppression of women, of course, goes back to the division of labor and so forth. In Europe and in England, women had a lot of authority pre-Catholic, pre-church times, of being the medicine people, of being the farmers, the people who kept the seeds, the spiritual people. There were some men, but this was mainly a woman's role - sort of the intellectual class. With the fencing of the commons and the Crusades, the lords and the monarchy, and the church targeted...these people of pre-Catholic religious practices...millions of people, mostly women were killed.

The woman body has a long history of being perceived as dirty, dangerous, and inferior. In the seventeenth century enlightenment rationale, a mind/body split placed the body as an instinctual site that could be controlled if properly managed, often using ‘Classical’ philosophers to bolster their arguments. Aristotle (c. 350 BCE) believed that women were defective men, representing a natural lack. From this perspective, women were born disabled because they could not generate semen, marking the woman body as passive. Plato (c. 360 BCE), while arguing for fairer treatment of women, believed that they represented degeneration and could possibly be

cowardly men reincarnated into woman bodies. These constructs, though not the first of their type, inform many euro-american perspectives about the inherent inferiority of women and the danger their bodies represent (Bordo 1993, 2003). Simone de Beauvoir (1949: 330) demonstrated that within Cartesian perspectives, men often became associated with the mind and woman with body, leading her to assert that that the category of woman is socially constructed. But still, female bodies remained under constant scrutiny for the supposed natural danger they possessed and often as a result of sexual reproduction.

The female reproductive system, always situated within constructed contexts, was frequently deemed as mobile and unstable, leading many to assume that women needed constant surveillance and regulated physical movement (Kukla 2005). Women could not be trusted because their bodies naturally moved in unexpected and unregulated ways, among other reasons. This mobility concern worked in tandem with misogynistic practices to mark the woman body as perpetually problematic. Not only should this particular body be constantly managed and controlled, but the body could endanger others around it. Unregulated movement brought dangers such as sexual deviance and bastard children who threatened inheritances. Worse, the woman body remained a mystery and could, therefore, be capable of anything at any time. Restrictions on women's physical movement was argued, by many men, to be paramount, and it's no accident that fashionable clothing, such as corsets and high heels, created new beauty standards and notions of femininity while simultaneously slowing and controlling movement (Milani 2011). While many women challenged these perceptions by turning sexuality and sexual reproduction into positive power exercises (Lorde 1984; O'Brien 1981; Rich 1979; Ruddick 1989), it didn't change the fact that many euro-americans continued to fear women's bodies partly because of mobility conceptions.

Importantly, non-white women were usually excluded from the Woman category altogether. With the advent of race and white supremacy, colonizers used black women for economic exploitation, rape, kinship work, and the politics of terror, often arguing that these specific beings did not meet the full criteria of being Woman, let alone Human (Davis 1972, 1983; Hooks 1999; Truth 1851). Invaders also labelled Indigenous women as Savages to be disappeared, raped, terrorized, murdered (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014; Ross 1998). These colonizers routinely committed violent acts against Native women to birth the American nation. In the twentieth century, women of Asian descent were simultaneously too foreign to be Woman and just Woman enough to fulfill colonial sexual desires (Stoler 1989; Yamamoto 2000). With these exclusions, most Euro-Americans marked Woman as white and, therefore, hierarchically positioned above all people of color who lacked 'full' European lineage. Even individuals considered partially white or of somewhat European descent – such as people labelled Mullatta, Mestiza, Octoroon – did not always qualify as Woman thanks to one-drop rules and other racist ideologies. In this context, Woman and white supremacy fused to create a being that, while still inferior and dangerous to white men, was naturally superior to all women of color around her. The white woman became essential in the reformation and continuation of white male power.

Labor often coupled with white supremacy to construct the Woman category in ways that continue to reverberate today. Euro-American enslavers viewed Black men and Black women as chattel: things, not Humans, of profit. Most Black women lived as fieldworkers, expected to fulfill the exact same quotas as their male counterparts even as they cared for children and performed household work (Davis 1984). But Black women were also subject to gendered violence, specifically rape and sexual abuse. While enslaved men could also be victims of this type of oppression, it was women who lived with it as a constant threat. Enslavers also utilized

Black women to create future profit through sexual reproduction. As chattel, children of enslaved women were property of white owners and young were sold off to the highest bidder. In this context, Black women were simultaneously genderless, because they labored as men, and beings who suffered specifically gendered power asymmetries. Many Indigenous women were also enslaved and placed in human zoos where euro-americans could leer and ponder over their primitivity due to their supposed less-than-human status (Sánchez-Gómez 2013). Other Indigenous women were forced to labor in households, at tourist attractions, and in agricultural industries for little to no money (Raibmon 2006). The category of Woman did not protect these women from exploitative, capitalist labor demands. And though class constructs didn't completely protect poor white women from many abusive labor practices, their whiteness ensured that the benefits of Woman could be bestowed upon them, given the proper circumstances. In short, white women could be Woman because they were white and labor expectations went hand-in-hand with their race.

Women of color often had to perform what David Graeber (2015: 67) calls intentional labor, or the constant work of “trying to decipher others’ motives and perceptions,” usually because the use of force, or even the threat of violence, was not a tactic available to them in their everyday lives, at least not without punishing repercussions. Women of color had to foresee, guess, imagine, and prepare for possible actions of the men and white peoples around them. This perpetual extra labor can be exhausting, adding to marginalized individuals work and creating stress that those who can wield violence, and the threat of force, with little blowback do not often have to contend with. While white women and men of color had to perform intentional labor also, they did not live at the intersection of the most marginalized identities. This argument is not meant to create hierarchies of pain, but instead, acknowledges only the often invisible and added



labor burdens that women of color, especially Black women, had/have to perform. And part of this work included predicting what types of touch were socially acceptable, ambiguous, and dangerous.

Touch played, and continues to play, an important role in the constructed inferiority and danger of woman bodies. For many, euro-american bodily senses often follow a hierarchized Aristotelian pattern, with taste and touch being the basis for existence and the others necessary for well-being (Stewart 2005). Aristotle (1957, 350 BCE) argued that touch was the most enigmatic sense because he associated it with earth, and believed that it provided the foundation for every other bodily sensation. But while taste and touch were fundamental for life, hearing, sight, and smell made the body Human, meaning women inherently lacked full access to that category. Following the Aristotelian model, many european societies during the medieval, renaissance, and enlightenment periods equated touch, taste, and smell with the domain of animals and women, and sight and sound with (white) human men (Stewart 2005). Women were particularly associated with the tactile sense because they existed as bodies closely tied to earth and sexual reproduction. Importantly, to be Human was to hear and see and in very particular ways. Humans still had five senses, but they were not equal to one another, and some were to be regarded with great skepticism. As women became equated with the tactile sense, many continued to move down social hierarchies into naturalized inferior categories.

Part of this naturalization process crafted woman bodies as passive. This practice has been well-documented by feminist scholars across numerous disciplines (Bordo 2003, 1993; Cavallaro and Warwick 1998; Kukla 2005; Lock 1993; Martin 1987, 1991; Scully et al. 2010; Tong 1996). The perceived passivity came about with the help of capitalist notions of labor efficiency and production, as well as sensorial ideals, specifically the power of touch. In many

euro-american contexts, as beings with passive bodies, women are to be touched (specifically by men) more often than they reciprocate (Henley 1973; Montagu 1986). And women of color were to be touched at even greater rates and often with assumed violence because they were not Woman enough, or not Woman at all. Many men expect to grab, caress, stroke, and assault Woman bodies in both private and public domains, signifying a perceived superior status to them (Field 2014). Unlike the power of Christ-like touch, in these circumstances, laying hands does not heal. It dominates. Complicating matters, the Woman body often simultaneously represents nurturing and sexual desire. A woman's touch is believed by many to heal and even create beings with higher IQs and stronger immune systems, while their sexual touch can drive a person (usually a heterosexual man) into frenzy. Margaret Mead (1935) argued that Arapesh peoples exhibited peaceful characteristics partly because women constantly held children against their bodies. Despite Reo Fortune's (1939) challenge of this claim, researchers continued to connect touch with emotional well-being, often using biological arguments and animal studies to bolster their theories (Field 1999, 1999; Field and Widmayer 1981; Hertenstein et al. 2006; Hertenstein et al. 2009; Konner 1976; Prescott and Wallace 1976; Schanberg 1995). In these scenarios, the power of woman's touch results from longstanding naturalized gender and sexuality practices alongside constructed notions of touch itself.

### ***The Gendered Body and Correctional Controls***

euro-american enlightenment notions about the body reign supreme at the Desert Echo Facility. For most staff, being a woman equates to a lack, a disability even, while simultaneously possessing an abundance of dangerous characteristics. Aristotle and enlightenment men would be proud. It is assumed that women do not possess enough strength or rationality to be a functioning correctional officer, but they do carry with them an innate sexuality and ability to manipulate. As

such, the correctional officer is marked ‘male’ with a body that performs stereotypical masculine traits, such as attraction to women and aggressive behavior. At the time of fieldwork, there were only 11 female COs (out of approximately 140) at the DEF, and they must often contend with the perceived dangers of working with ‘inmates’ and the sexism and misogyny of their cohort. In other words, they have to perform intentional labor that many others do not even think about. This places more pressure on them to perform aggressive acts, hide any emotional responses (other than anger) to their work, and maintain as much distance as possible from incarcerated people’s bodies and relationships. To be Woman, or perceived as feminine, at the DEF is to be stigma.

Following notions that women remain inherently inferior and dangerous beings based partially on ideas about how their unregulated movement proves detrimental for themselves and others around them, male COs grapple with what it means to have little control over their own movement and bodies throughout their workday. Male workers spoke to me about how they despise being locked inside the DEF and how it makes them feel less masculine. They also become extremely upset when prison administrators reprimand them for policy infractions, such as leaving unit doors open for easier CO movement, actions that either clearly occurred when no one was around<sup>xxv</sup> or should not be commented on by other men. These conflicts arise because most men on the compound associate restricted movement or immobility with inferiority and femininity. The chart below provides a description:



And to be man, masculine, and to move without restriction is to be hierarchically superior to its constructed binary opposite.

At the DEF, I observed multiple male correctional officers walking around the prison perimeter to avoid going through more locked gates and doors. Mr. Alvarado explains:

I hate having to open and lock all these gates because it reminds me I'm in here all the time. There are days when I will go the long way just to avoid unlocking one more fence.... The more I lock these fences, the more I'm reminded that I'm locked in here too. Sometimes that's enough to make me want to drink.

When I asked why it feels so bad to be locked inside the compound, he laughed with a mocking tone and stated:

Look, I know people talk about you being gay and all, but you're still a man, right? Men aren't supposed to be locked down all day. We're hunters. You know, cavemen and shit went out all day and, like, hunted for food. Now, we're all cooped up in these cages.... Men need space. We aren't supposed to be all controlled like animals. So, if it means going the long way to get out of here, I'll do it just to avoid closing one more fucking door.

Mr. Alvarado follows a specific hunter/gatherer trope that Margaret W. Conkey and Janet D. Spector (1984) have thoroughly debunked, and the authors specifically mention how the Man-the-Hunter model collapses time and space into a particular contemporary narrative where men are active (and I argue mobile) and women are passive (immobile). And because it is an evolutionary argument, men as mobile hunters and women as passive gatherers, men become naturally superior to women, no matter the evidence otherwise. Furthermore, Mr. Alvarado's aversion to touching locks and fences demonstrates how powerful the tactile sense is at the DEF. Touching the locks and fences not only reminds him that he is locked inside a prison compound, but it is also an embodied mobility control that makes him feel less masculine. Other COs echo this sentiment, telling me that "men naturally need to move around," "men can never really be

controlled,” and “a woman’s place is in the home with the kids.” Many of the COs who informed me of this perspective usually began their sentences with “Since the beginning of time” or ending with “it’s always been that way.” What is clear is that most male COs assume that it is in men’s nature to move around while women’s nature is one of stasis. Interestingly, while men usually framed their desire for unrestricted movement to be a natural design, they usually used words or phrases that noted the need to control women’s movement. Statements such as a woman’s “place” was in the home with kids and women “have learned to like staying put” were common throughout the compound. Some men went as far as to advise that the reason men are able to sexually assault women is because women were moving around where they weren’t supposed to be in the first place. These actions and perspectives demonstrate that an ideal Man exists or can be made manifest. A Man controls the movements of inferior beings, remains heterosexual, and performs necessary violence. These notions naturalize the idea that men should move without restriction while women should not.

This construction informs how correctional officers perform their dirty mobility work and how they define themselves through their labor. DEF correctional workers already often feel overwhelmingly stigmatized by the work they perform. Much of this stigma stems from worker worries that their proximity to incarcerated people taints them in ways that mark staff as too similar to captives (see Goffman 1963). Throughout their training and correctional career, staff become immersed in assumptions about those they oversee – namely that they are dangerous and highly manipulative, intellectually and socially inferior, inefficient and unproductive beings, and creatures whom destroy precisely because they are not fully Human – stigmas that women have

had to contend with for centuries. As Mr. Vega explains, these assumptions and the work that follows carry unexpected consequences:

The worst part about this job is that you start thinking like these fuckers. We're already so suspicious of everyone around us and looking and observing what everybody does. It makes us feel like we can't trust anyone or anything, and that's what makes this job so hard. The job's a lot of work and extremely stressful and it weighs on us, but we gotta find a way to leave the job at the door when we go home...I still have some problems with talking to my wife in a very authoritative tone, and I get real upset if I tell somebody, or even ask somebody, to do something and they don't do it right away. I get so angry sometimes and I don't know why and can't even explain it...I think I'm just so worried that I'm just like those fuckers. I mean, I'm around them more than anyone else. I don't think you can be around this much scum and not have it rub off on you.

Mr. Jareo, a Chicano CO of eight years, later added that "our language gets much harsher, you know. We curse so much. One time I told my son that I would shakedown his room if he didn't clean it up. It just came out of my mouth." Multiple COs, including those who had worked at the DEF for under three years, told me that their utmost concern remains that they may be perceived, or actually are, too similar to incarcerated people.

But Mr. Vega's statement has a double meaning that directly reflects his concerns with having to perform intentional labor. While he is worried that he is becoming too similar to his captives, he is directly concerned about having to constantly foresee, guess, imagine, and prepare for the possible violence that they can enact. As people stationed hierarchically superior to individuals residing at the DEF and Woman in general, male correctional officers are not accustomed to constantly navigating the possible threats of the other living beings around them. Worse, as men, they are not supposed to have to perform this labor and are the people who wield violence against inferior things. The intentional labor is too much for their bodies partially because it adds to their workload but mostly because it challenges their masculinity. As most

DEF male staff believe that men are supposed to move without restriction while women's movement needs to be controlled, they feel their personal movement restricted by their labor. This feeling threatens their images of themselves as mobile, masculine hunters and places them closer to the domain of Woman. When Mr. Vega displays concern that he is becoming like his captives, he's simultaneously worrying about being too similar to those he labels 'inmates,' but also fears that he is womanly. His fragile masculinity is on full display because of his mobility conceptions. And as women have historically been associated with the body, Mr. Vega, and his fellow male staff, feel dirtied by his work in ways he did not expect. These concerns manufacture even more threat and demonstrate many men's fragility. It is a wound to their manhood. And a threatened, wounded man is often the most dangerous creature around.

Throughout the DEF, most COs feel as if they become dirty themselves and often participate in what scholars have called reframing (making the meaning of dirty work more positive), recalibrating (playing up the positive aspects of their work while downplaying the negative aspects), and refocusing (overlooking stigmatized aspects of prison labor) (Ashforth and Kreiner 2002; Dick 2005; Drew et al. 2007; Kreiner and Ashforth 2004; Kreiner et al. 2006; Tracy 2004; Tracy and Scott 2006). These practices 'clean' correctional work slightly by allowing security personnel to manage the taint of everyday prison labor, but they do so through masculinist practices that contribute to rampant sexism and misogyny. Many workers manufacture "old boys clubs," that excludes women for the sake of dealing with correctional life. Some men even carry physical cards with the words "man card" written on them, and threaten to take them away from those who do not act manly. In this context, men are normatively heterosexual individuals who work and thrive in dangerous environments, demean women and femininity by any means necessary, and move without restriction (See Tracy and Scott 2006 for

similar examples). The following exchange between COs Mr. Ponce and Mr. Martín provides a clear demonstration of these practices:

Mr. Ponce: The public doesn't really understand what we do. They think we just sit around all day. Like we're sleeping and taking money. Right *guey*?

Mr. Martín: Yeah. The public needs to understand that we protect them by making sure inmates don't run loose all over their towns. You know, we lock down Chesters and rapists. We put our lives on the line so that women and kids are safe.

mg: Yeah, but what do you say to people who think incarceration is an extension of slavery?

Mr. Ponce: That's bullshit! COs walk the line every day, putting our lives in danger so that you don't have to. You can ask questions like that 'cuz you don't understand what these inmates are really like. Besides, it's not like we go around beating inmates up or nothing. Yeah, we lock them down, but we also make sure they get to medical when they need it.

Mr. Martín: Yeah. We have to do so much here. We have to protect ourselves and the public, and we have to protect these inmates. We do it all without complaining because it's our job. We have to control all this shit because without us, women and children would be attacked by these fuckers all the time.

Mr. Ponce: We do the work. We don't punk out like some bitch who can't control themselves. We show up and do the job. It's dangerous, but we're strong like that.

By reframing, recalibrating, and refocusing, Mr. Ponce and Mr. Martín remove some of the stigma, or taint, from the work they perform. They play up the fact that they “lock down” incarcerated people who have committed horrific crimes, arguing that their labor protects society. And by controlling captive's movements, they reassert their own manhood. In doing so, they lump all of them into two categories, Chesters and child rapists. At the DEF, these two crimes elicit the most anger and disgust. Mr. Vega even told me that he wishes that all Chesters would “have their balls cut off and bleed to death slowly.” By consolidating all captives into these two categories, many of whom in fact live in prison as a result of ‘non-violent’ charges, Mr. Ponce and Mr. Martín justify incarceration and highlight the importance of their work. The



implication is that their work is both necessary and moral. They downplay the oppressive characteristics of imprisoning people, including locking individuals in small cells and controlling access to material and social relations, by clearly stating that their actions keep society safe. In so doing, they reinforce masculinist notions that they work with the “worst of the worst,” affectively creating caricatures of incarcerated people and themselves.

In turning all captives into Chesters and child rapists, Mr. Ponce and Mr. Martín demonstrate a fascination with touch. Both child molestation and child rape partially rely upon the violence of inappropriate touching as a means to dominate. But what is most interesting is that many COs turn all incarcerated people into perpetrators of these crimes. They have a multitude of charges they could label them with, but they settle on these particular two. While the underlying reasons for this focus certainly comes from how the child is viewed within many euro-american contexts (see Lee Edelman 2004), touch cannot be removed from this scenario, nor can gendered ideals. Adult rape of women does not elicit the same disgust, and many staff openly question if men convicted of raping women were brought up on false charges. The idea that women “cry rape” is pervasive at the DEF, providing evidence that men assaulting women has been naturalized. While I will return to the fascination with child molestation and rape in chapter six, I mention it here to illustrate how touch can be utilized by staff to create a larger distinction between themselves and their captives. Even if they believe that women are meant to be touched (violently or otherwise), most do not dare to voice an understanding of child molestation and rape, a crime for which men are overwhelmingly convicted. But even this delineation is not enough to completely overcome feelings that they have been tainted by their labor.

By generating and measuring mobility data with their eyes, ears, and hands, correctional officers' bodies sense incarceration throughout their shift, and, in doing so, male COs begin to feel that their bodies begin to define them. Because women in euro-american contexts have historically been relegated to the domain of body, men who conduct correctional labor find themselves questioning their manhood. Men constantly speak about how "manly" and how "much of a man" they are, and how they possess more rationality than women. The following exchange is representative of this concern:

Mr. Vega: I can't stand these pussies. Some of these new COs just want to whine and talk about their feelings all the time. Fucking man up, and do your job *pendejo*.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Mr. Jareo: Yeah, this new generation doesn't know how to do the job yet. I don't know if they ever can. They don't have the *cajones*,<sup>xxvii</sup> you know. [Pointing to me] *Flaca*<sup>xxviii</sup> couldn't do this work. You have to be a man.

Mr. Vega: [Laughing] And you have to act like a man. 'Cuz if you don't, you're going to be locked down like a bitch.

In this conversation, Mr. Vega and Mr. Jareo demonstrate fragile masculinities born out of their sexism about restricted movement concerns. After all, if you don't act like a man, you'll be "locked down like a bitch."

Compounding these concerns, using their bodies for mobility controls collapses the physical and social space between themselves and their captives. At the DEF, being too close to incarcerated people remains the quickest way to be admonished by peers and banished from the premises. "Too close" refers to the literal proximation of bodies on the compound and spaces of intimacies. Officers remain hypervigilant of where their body situates in relation to captives, resulting in security personnel constantly worrying about every little movement they make and that of others. This vigilance contributes to the creation of a habitus that emphasizes a bodily state of suspicion. COs also worry that physical proximity breeds improper intimate

relationships, which can result in highly manipulative captives conning workers into bringing contraband into the facility or entering into sexual relationships with them. This means COs can never fully relax their bodies because someone or something may be moving around them. When captives walk, greet peers with fist bumps, or even breathe heavily, COs pay attention. They also scrutinize which worker speaks to which incarcerated person and for how long. Because the correctional body watches, listens, and feels for these movements, many feel as if their body turns against them. In a state of suspicion their heart beats uncontrollably and they are sensitive to miniscule stimuli. They believe it is their duty to keep order on the compound, but they didn't expect that in using their bodies for mobility controls, they would inadvertently feel too close to their captives and be forced to question their own masculinity. Mr. Vega and Mr. Jareo's anxiety that they become like incarcerated people because they spend so much time around them demonstrates a clear concern I heard or witnessed from dozens of correctional officers.

The constant concern about being "too close" with captives manifests larger than expected security workers' senses of personal space.<sup>xxix</sup> When asked, most COs informed me that they feel uncomfortable when anyone on the compound (and often outside of the prison, as well) comes within five to ten feet of their body, something I witnessed throughout my fieldwork. With the belief that men naturally require more space than women, this spatial construction results in dozens of workers feeling troubled by the hundreds of incarcerated people constantly infringing upon their personal space. Because COs believe that physical proximity leads to improper relationships, they must control the latter's movements while guarding themselves against unwanted relationships with "inmates." When a person gets too physically close, they bring the danger of becoming too "familiar" with them, as Mr. Ponce explains:

We always watch people like you [referring to mg] because you don't understand what these inmates are up to. They call you over to them, pretending they have an

innocent question, and then they groom you. They ask you information about yourself, where you're from, and why you decided to work here. You know, shit like that... And then they up the ante and begin asking you about personal things like what kind of food you like and your favorite movies. A lot of them just try telling you jokes and shit. That stuff wears many people down and they forget that they're dealing with inmates. Once you forget that, you become too close and then you're doing things you didn't expect...I can't tell you how many times I've seen people fall in this place. They get too close and then they're getting fired or charged with improper conduct. Even COs sometimes get caught up in that shit. Everyone can get got by these inmates.

Every CO I spoke with had a story about another worker, usually women, getting "too close" with incarcerated people. They tell these stories over and over, using humor in most of them, to speak about the constant danger of physical and social proximity with their captives. When an incarcerated person gets too physically close to COs, they bring a possible improper relationship with them. This infringement adds to the feelings of threat that provide further evidence that COs are in perpetual danger, affectively creating much of the danger itself. COs must then grapple with how to control people, their own bodies, and their fragile masculinity while working up to 16-hour shifts. Most officers become overwhelmed by these feelings and find it difficult to determine how they are distinct from their captives, if they ever were at all. The problem with their created affective facts is that they come back to punish security workers themselves. If the incarcerated people are inferior and threats personified, then COs, troubled by their closeness with their captives, may be inferior as well. Because these feelings manifest a semi-permanent temporality, if COs are inferior now, then they have always been and will always be. These feelings cannot just go away when officers want them to. They control mobility, dirtying up their own bodies, for upwards of 60 hours per week. It is through mobility and bodily senses that space is constructed at the DEF. Once these feelings manifest and space is created, it becomes

extremely difficult for COs to delineate between themselves and those forced to live in prison. Worse, because of these concerns, they may not be men after all.

These concerns result in security personnel endlessly discussing who is getting “too close” to incarcerated people on any given day. While correctional officers believe that education, medical, and administrative staff are the most susceptible to this problem (positions, interestingly, mostly held by women), COs often discuss other security workers as well. They speak with clear contempt for officers who provide people with extra toiletries and food because they suspect that this action demonstrates an inappropriate relationship. They also use humor to publicly call out any worker whom they believe traffics in physical and relational violations, often attacks on masculinity. Most of this speech and humor occurs with COs speaking about how other workers need to “man up” and control their emotions because that’s what keeps personnel from getting too close to captives. But this humor also allows COs to create spaces where they can laugh together and bond with other workers. Still, this practice plays up longstanding heterosexist notions that real men need space and don’t get too close, physically and socially, to other men.

This preoccupation with being too close at the DEF underscores the importance of touch when it comes to mobility controls. Alongside touching gates and cell doors and constantly pressing buttons or computer mice for mechanized locks, COs strictly monitor whom incarcerated people and staff members touch. Written DEF policies provide some guidelines for appropriate contact during frisks, strip searches, and extractions,<sup>xxx</sup> but there remain unclear rules for everyday physical contact outside of these specific practices. As a result, correctional officers often unevenly apply a “no touching” policy in an attempt to remove potential threats.

Mr. Alvarado advises:

I'm not too worried about inmates giving each other handshakes or fist bumps. It's an easy way to recognize who's getting along and who's gonna cause some shit. If they're greeting each other in a friendly way, then I can be pretty sure that there's not going to be some nonsense going down...I do worry when I see workers, especially education and medical, touching inmates. That's not good. That's too close. That could mean that they're doing something they're not supposed to, if you know what I mean.

Ms. Cortes adds:

I try not to shake their hands or anything because that's too friendly, and people will talk. It's hard though because you get into the rhythm of your day and your chatting with someone and the next thing you know, you're shaking their hand. If anyone tells management that you're too close to an inmate, your job's on the line. You have to worry about other COs stabbing you in the back more than the inmates sometimes...But there are times when I look at other workers with some concern. I've seen [a teacher] hug her student and that's just asking for trouble. You don't know what that inmate is thinking and getting from that. But you also know that you don't want people talking.

Mr. Ponce also told me that I needed to remember that every time I shook hands or greeted an incarcerated person with a fist bump, I placed myself under more scrutiny. "You shouldn't be touching inmates. They're trying to get something from you, and that handshake isn't just a handshake. It's inviting trouble," he explained. Mr. Martín also made clear that touching implies a closer relationship than allowed on the compound. But when I asked, he also explained that "it's exhausting watching for all that shit. But it's our job. We have to pay attention to those things because someone could get killed." These notions demonstrate that touch plays a large role in "keeping order" on the DEF compound. It's another bodily sense utilized for mobility controls. If a captive finds themselves accused of inappropriate touching, then they could be placed into a higher security level where their physical movement will be restricted even further. And the employee could be sanctioned and fired. Furthermore, Mr. Ponce's links touch and violence when he says that he has to pay attention to touch or "someone

could get killed.” In this context, inappropriate relationships can create dangerous environments which, in turn, threatens order on the compound.

As COs focus on the tactile sense, they declare that all touching between staff and captive is dangerous, marking incarcerated people and staff as hierarchically distinct, as most staff still greet each other with handshakes, fist bumps, and hugs. Incarcerated people witness these small moments and understand that workers may consider them inferior and unworthy of touch at all, compounding their feelings of isolation. And as touch has historically been associated with women, though men also participate in touching rituals and practices, these rules assert a natural male dominance into their gender hierarchies. Staff and captive alike must also bear the consequences of this informal policy because they have to remain aware of where their body is compared to everyone, or everything, else and it places harsh gender restrictions on everyone involved. This practice proves exhausting and almost impossible to endure long-term.

The utilization of touch as a mobility control also contributes to correctional workers’ (of all types) belief that incarcerated people lack full human status and exist naturally and hierarchically beneath them. Ms. Tapia informs:

These fucking inmates don’t have nothing good about them. They’re bad news, you know. They want to pull you down to their level because they ain’t like you and me. Inmates have something missing...They destroy everyone around them; they’re *familia*, they’re *novia*,<sup>xxxi</sup> you. And they take pride in getting you to fall. Especially if they get one of us.

Expanding upon these comments, Mr. Ponce adds:

These things are just pieces of shit. They fuck up everything and want to make you just like them. Inmates don’t understand how much pain they cause cuz they don’t really feel it themselves. And then we come along and have to cater to their every need. Feed them, take them to the shower, make sure they don’t fuckin die on us...And some COs get too close, and they get you. Then you’re on their level and out of a job and maybe even in prison. All because you forgot that these things aren’t like you and me.

Almost every correctional worker spoke of incarcerated people as beings hierarchically beneath them, often speaking about staff who “fall.”<sup>xxxii</sup> To fall means to conduct yourself in a way that demonstrates undue familiarity with captives. This often occurs when staff provide individuals with access to social and material relations that many COs believe they do not deserve. To fall also insinuates that you are now on the same level as an inferior being. Within this notion, harbors ideals about touch and gender. To be on a captive’s level means you have been touched by them in some manner. Fallen employees usually bring in (or are assumed to have brought in) contraband or enter into sexual relationships with those whom they have become “too close.” Worse, fallen staff (disproportionately women) may even desire this touch, marking them as disgusting and dirty. Sometimes, staff call fallen employees, or those they believe are about to fall, “hug-a-thugs.” The term hug-a-thug indicates a clear apprehension for touch and a “too close” relationship between worker and captive. When a prison employee provides material and social relations not sanctioned by most correctional staff, they open themselves up to be touched, in some form or fashion, by these actions. In this historical context, men are supposed to touch women more than the other way around, and so, by desiring or allowing yourself to be touched by incarcerated men, you open yourself up to the charge of desiring to be Woman. As mobility work already collapses the social space between COs and captive people and because correctional officers think of themselves as a collective, any fallen employee effectively obliterates all social division between these two categorical persons. Maintaining this tenuous sense of space becomes paramount. When someone falls, everyone gets that much closer to the dangerous captive and a womanly status.

Because of the belief that women are naturally inferior to men, many women need to develop intentional strategies and tactics that navigate sexism and misogyny. Men are supposed



to have little to no restrictions on their movements, men naturally need space, men touch women when they want. Women COs who work directly with incarcerated people often take of what they consider masculine attributes and performances as a means to remove their supposed stigma. Ms. Cortes, like many heterosexual women working with captives at the facility, wears little makeup and places her hair in a tight ponytail or bun. She also makes sure that she doesn't sway her hips "too much" when she walks and often speaks about how she feels more comfortable around men because they know how to keep control of their emotions. But she also tells stories about her love of cooking and taking care of her children, highlighting that it is woman's work. Ms. Villanueva, a correctional officer of over ten years and in her sixties, followed many of these same practices and advised that it's necessary to do the job as a man would because it makes her life easier. When pressed, she told me that women can do this job without men, but that:

[Male] COs would treat me badly if I don't pump up their egos. They think women are beneath them. But we do more work than they do.... I don't wear makeup here or do my hair because then they'll think I'm looking for something. You know, looking for a man. Why would I want an inmate? They aren't going to offer me anything I need!

Observing many male COs, I found Ms. Villanueva's concerns to be completely valid. When men on the compound corralled together in groups of three or more, they often only spoke about women in a derogatory manner. The main topic of discussion was women who "came here" looking for a date, signifying that they believed many women desired a sexual relationship with an incarcerated person. The only women immune from these accusations were self-identifying butch lesbians, whom made up about half the female CO population. They were 'immune' because most men did not think of them as sexually desirable. But male COs also placed them under suspicion of being "too manly" and worried that lesbian officers challenged their

masculinity. So, most male COs mocked lesbian workers, and openly discussed their “mannish” haircuts and gaits, while simultaneously stating that, as women, they still lacked the inherent capabilities of being a correctional officer.

Although it traffics in gendered stereotypes, when Ms. Cortes describes herself as a natural nurturer, she opens new relational possibilities in which men on the compound find nearly impossible to replicate. Almost on a daily basis, I witnessed Ms. Cortes offering advice to multiple incarcerated men about their wives and girlfriends, and she often joked with them about their appearance, including their hairstyles, their tattoos, and their body shapes. She also attempted to console a captive after a male CO destroyed a plant he grew from a bean in a plastic cup. We would often sit at her post as she talked about how it was better to treat those who were imprisoned with some decency because no matter what they had done, they were still human beings. And most incarcerated people responded to her with polite tones, respectful jokes, and even informed her when they thought another CO was scrutinizing her actions a little too closely. Ms. Villanueva echoed this sentiment, advising that these people are someone’s family and that she wouldn’t want someone to be unkind if she had an imprisoned child. She also spoke to incarcerated people with a measured, but respectful tone, and offered a motherly guidance when she believed any captive was about to go down a path that could result in further punishment. Both these women emphasize the fact that they are women to navigate the rampant sexism and misogyny in their daily lives. When I asked if there were any repercussions for this tactic, Ms. Villanueva told me that she is already being heavily scrutinized by all the men anyways (something I confirmed through my observations), so she might as well use what benefits she could get from celebrating the fact that she is a woman. “The inmates treat me different because

I'm a woman, and I can speak to them like a mother. The fact that I'm a woman works in my favor right now. Why not use it?"

When male COs notice that some women emphasize their “womanliness” to their advantage, they usually gossip with other men about how this proves women shouldn't be allowed to work in a prison. They also use it as an excuse to scrutinize anyone considered a woman even more closely. Utilizing stereotypical behaviors associated with their gender allows individual women to do their work without some of the stresses attached to masculinity, but it also reifies notions that gender is not only real, but also hierarchical. Men on the compound assert that women are naturally inclined to be manipulated by their captives because they are naturally nurturing beings. They also believe that women simultaneously represent a lack of rationality and possess the capability to manipulate men because of their sexuality. When women try to perform masculinity, or downplay characteristics deemed feminine, male staff argue that they are acting like men and feel threatened. When women perform femininity, the same staff assert that they are looking to “date” a captive and worry they are getting too close to incarcerated people. At the DEF, just like there is ideal Man, there is also ideal Woman. But, for many male officers, what constitutes Woman is always conditional upon the concerns of fragile masculinities. For most male staff at the DEF, there is nothing a woman can do to completely rid herself of the stigma of Woman.

### **Masculine Hysteria**

Throughout this chapter, I demonstrated that DEF male correctional workers feel overwhelming stigmatized by their labor because they center mobility as the fundamental means to control incarcerated people. Correctional officers use their bodies to restrict movement in the facility and to gather and evaluate mobility data – such as observing physical movement,

listening for sounds of impending violence, and using touch to lock gates and fences – in ways that place themselves under a constant state of suspicion and creates affective feelings of perpetual, impending threat within the compound. This mobility work situates the correctional staff body as the site for mobility controls at the DEF. Their labor also troubles their constructed ideals about what constitutes Man and Woman. Unfortunately, for most staff, this bodily work manifests stigmatic feelings that mark COs as too similar to the people they control. In attempting to manage these feelings, most officers turn to sexist and misogynistic tactics that provide relief for some male staff at the expense of women and incarcerated individuals in the facility.

Focusing on tactility, I also provided evidence that DEF correctional workers display contempt for anyone considered Woman or feminine and adhere to european enlightenment gendered ideals of male and masculine supremacy. As women have historically been relegated to the domain of the body and touch determined to be a female sense, male COs pair tactility with sexism and misogyny to reconstruct gender binaries that ultimately render them feeling incarcerated and immobile. And so, they double-down on mobility controls to shore up their masculinity, which only serves to further frustrate their gendered ideals. The regulatory power that produces the CO also acts upon officers contending with how to perform masculinity as a means to exert their supposedly superior status. Their bodies, already existing in a state of suspicion, often deteriorate and many turn to alcohol and aggression to deal with these feelings. Unfortunately, their stigma cannot be fully removed, even when they construct affective facts to prove to themselves and others that their work is necessary and masculine. These COs also feel coerced into performing intentional labor, actions that have historically been associated with people who cannot wield violence without harsh repercussions. They are then threatened by their

fears about captives and their own masculine fragility. As this occurs, they feel overwhelmed by the manufactured threat they participated in creating and begin to worry that their movement is also being controlled within the prison. The gates and fences they touch turn from confining protection into infringements upon their masculinity. But it's too late to go back. The walls have been built around both the prison compound and their gender, rendering these men immobile. While there are always ways out, most male COs feel controlled and locked down because they imagine beings that are perfectly Man and Woman; beings that fit inside their appropriate borders and moving in their natural ways at all times. These constructs cause great tumult when male COs find themselves living outside gender walls. Women employees at the DEF must then navigate the constant threat of incarcerated people and the sexism and misogyny of their fellow officers. And captives have to contend with unsettling mobilities and the masculinist hysteria of their captors.

As male correctional staff emphasize mobility controls to administer prison policies, they demonstrate a clear hatred for and fear of women. I demonstrated that most workers believe that men are naturally superior to women and need unrestricted movement and more space. As men working in the prison utilize these gendered constructions in their daily work, they place all captives hierarchically beneath them and on the same level as women. Most individuals forced to reside at the DEF identify as men, so, from many COs' perspectives, this action serves to further punish incarcerated men by feminizing them while simultaneously buttressing workers' fragile masculinities. The hatred of women at the DEF informs how staff enact mobility controls because many male COs feel too much like Woman. When correctional staff control mobility at the DEF, they control gender. And they fear that this labor is slowly killing them.

## Chapter 4 Killing With Impunity

Mr. Feshad's back hurt terribly and his skin seemed to be more yellow than the day before. He knew something was terribly wrong, but he didn't want to walk across the compound to Medical at this moment. Unfortunately, scheduled movement dictated that he either remain in his unit or go to an approved location immediately. He knew he would not get another chance to see a nurse for three more days, so he exited the building and walked slowly towards the other side of the prison. He couldn't move too quickly because his back ached with each step and breathing made it worse. He worried that there was something seriously wrong with his kidneys, though every nurse told him to wait out the pain and placed him on some medication he had never heard of. But he couldn't take the medication whenever he wanted. He had to wait until the nurses came to his unit, if they came at all. Medical was pretty good at making their rounds, but there was always an excuse to skip over any convict. "We don't have you on the list," they would say, or "Don't speak to me with that tone because I'll walk out of here with the pills in my bag." Today, Mr. Feshad would go to them. He sent in a sick call paper a few days before and, once approved, he had planned to head to a nurse at the scheduled time.

Walking across the compound always proved more difficult than expected. He never knew which CO would be in a shitty mood and find any excuse to write him up or just fuck with him. He usually moved at a quicker pace to make sure that staff didn't bother him, but he had to take slow, measured steps today. He didn't get more than 50 feet from his unit before Ms. Cortes stopped him in his tracks. She asked him if he was okay and made sure he could make it to Medical on his own. He politely responded that he would be fine and continued on his way. Ms. Cortes was one of the good ones. She was a CO, but she tried to see convicts as Human, though she didn't always succeed. Still, she often gave a comforting glance that would disappear the

moment another CO came near. He was only 200 feet away from Medical at this point. If he somehow managed to take longer strides, he could be there before anyone stopped him. He held his breath and tried to move his legs a little faster, but it hurt too much, so he paused for a moment to inhale as deep as he could, hunched over with his face parallel to the cement ground.

Within moments he heard Sgt. Vega calling out for him to keep moving. When he didn't straighten his back and move immediately, the Sergeant yelled for him to come to his office. He turned to see the CO staring at him and he tried to call out that he was going to Medical because he was in too much pain. Vega didn't care. He turned his back away from Mr. Feshad to speak to another CO and waited until the captive was at his office door. "Why the fuck didn't you listen to me," he demanded loudly. When Mr. Feshad tried to explain his medical condition for the second time, the Sergeant put his hand in the air and told him he didn't need to hear inmate lies today. "Look at my skin," Mr. Feshad implored. But the Sergeant and the CO made a joke about how his skin must be yellow because he's a coward, playing the victim card. "Poor little victim. Always crying about being treated bad. Shouldn't have committed that crime inmate" Trying to hide his rage, Mr. Feshad turned to head to Medical, but was forced to stop when the Sergeant ordered him to go to Education and speak with the librarian. Because of the schedule, if he went to Education, he would be stuck there for two hours. Then he would have to head back to his unit for Count – the hour-long lockdown from 11 AM to noon where every convict must be counted by COs. Then Chow<sup>xxxiii</sup> would begin and he would miss his window to meet with a nurse. Prison officials only approved him to see Medical this morning, which means he would have to get approval for another day to get some sort of physical exam from a medical professional. But when he tried to explain this to the two COs standing in front of him, he was told to shut up, listen, and move on to Education. He heard them laughing quietly as he lurched away from

Medical and towards the library. “Should have moved when I told you to,” he heard the Sergeant yell out to him.

### **Employed Ignorance**

State administrators situate all people within the DEF compound into three main categories that heavily impact social relations: Security workers, non-security staff, and incarcerated people. The term security workers refers to correctional officers and specialized divisions such as the Threat Action Unit (TAU). Though all employees are tasked with keeping order, security workers are the only employees whose job description requires them to utilize force to control captives. COs must also adhere to rigid schedules and enforce these timetables throughout their work day. Non-security staff members – including medical, educational, mental health, sanitation specialists, technicians, and low-level everyday office administrators – perform their own specified duties based upon their work position. Non-security staff do not receive weapons, nor are they allowed to use them, and they must remain within their own departments and move only to their specified locations, other than leaving at the end of their shift or exiting to areas where incarcerated people do not reside for a quick smoke or food break. Alongside their stratified work tasks, the differences between security and non-security staff are readily apparent. Most COs identify or present as men, are darker-skinned (mostly brown), and come from lower socio-economic backgrounds similar to many incarcerated people. Most non-security staff identify or present as female (though the gender gap is less stark than in the CO population), are light-skinned (mostly light-brown and white), and come from middle to upper-middle socio-economic backgrounds. While staff produce and maintain nuances and hierarchies within these groups, the division between security/non-security worker remains the most important distinction



on the compound other than incarcerated/non-incarcerated person. But no matter the position, state administrators expect all workers to adhere to the prison schedule.

Throughout my first few months employed as an educator at the DEF in 2011, I remained fascinated at the machine-like efficiency with which administrators crafted, and ensured correctional staff enacted, detailed schedules. Correctional officers conducted their required duties at their assigned areas, meal distribution began around the same times every day, and programing – educational, vocational, and religious services – seemed to start and end within approved timeframes. As an employee, I was told by trainers and workers not to diverge from my schedule because disobeying this order could get me, or someone else, killed. The schedule must be maintained for the safety of everyone on the compound and everyone living throughout the country, or so I was repeatedly told. And so, I followed this command to the best of my ability. I arrived at prison gates and classrooms at the scheduled times, sat patiently at locked doors until staff allowed entrance, and reprimanded captives when they departed from the timetable agendas. After all, I believed the story that the prison schedule kept everyone safe from the potential violence that all captives could create, given the chance.

The schedule was supposedly effective at curbing violence because it worked in tandem with thousands of small rules governing everyday life – from types of socks someone could wear, types of food they could eat, hygiene products they could use, and ways they could position their bodies on their cots. Correctional staff followed numerous rules as well, though not as stringent and never as many. As an employee, I was expected to wear state-approved attire, never offer an incarcerated person anything other than sanctioned educational materials, provide answers to all security staff's questions, and report any movement that diverged from the schedule to my supervisor. The lists go on and on. But I rarely questioned the rigidity of prison life and ignored

captives when they complained that they had been rerouted from their schedule by correctional staff. That couldn't possibly happen because everyone knew that all safety relied upon the prison timetable.

Years later, as I conducted anthropological research at the DEF, I began to scrutinize the prison schedule to understand how it constructed social interactions on the compound. I observed its creation in weekly administrative meetings and how correctional staff implemented its doctrines. Almost immediately I realized that most workers did not follow every tenet of the schedule, and many actively ignored it altogether. How could people who constantly worry about impending violence disregard the very thing described as the most important factor in keeping them safe? And why would they do this? I remembered countless meetings where administrators reminded employees to monitor their time because the schedule must be maintained. But clearly this was not true.

It was in this moment of deep confusion that I watched Mr. Feshad attempt to make his way to Medical, hunched over and moving extremely slowly. I observed Sgt. Vega and another CO harass him and force him to enter the Education building. Sitting in the small library, I asked Mr. Feshad to explain what I had just witnessed. He advised that he was always hassled when moving across the compound and that most incarcerated people suffer the same abuse. Four other men sitting nearby leaned into our conversation to tell me stories about all types of staff coercing their movement when they try to remain on schedule. "So many cops stop us when we're supposed to go to work, or education, or chapel, and fuck with us," one person informed. It became increasingly clear that as captives attempt to traverse prison landscapes, they find themselves trapped within power dynamics where they must acquiesce to the movement

demands of their captors often in ways that undermine shallow notions of scheduled safety. “But don’t worry,” Mr. Feshad smiled, “COs are fucked up by this place too.”

In this chapter, I examine how correctional staff control incarcerated people’s physical movements in ways that disrupt rigid timetables and unsettle asymmetrical power dynamics within the prison compound in order to demonstrate that COs utilize mobility to assert their power to kill. Training manuals and dominant discourses at the DEF extol the importance of maintaining strict schedules as a means to keep everyone in the facility, and the entire ‘outside’ society, safe. But in practice, correctional staff trouble this perspective when they purposefully divert captives from their routines. In doing so, staff undermine their argument that scheduled living equates to safety and display feelings of discomfort with the work they perform. Underlying these disruptions are correctional worker beliefs that not all labor is created equal. Many non-security staff believe that COs do not exhibit any skillset that can be linked to their absolute necessity. Correctional officers, many non-security workers assert, are always replaceable because anyone can do their job, and, most importantly, many people equate COs and incarcerated people within similar social positions. For their part, COs already worry that they are, or are perceived to be, too close to those they oversee, and disrupt incarcerated peoples’ movement and schedules to demonstrate their right to kill.

I then connect these practices to correctional officers’ desires to be viewed as law enforcement agents. Many COs speak often about their desire to be given then same benefits that police officers receive in many american contexts, and they actively perform trainings where they rush into units, cuff people, and hold weapons ready to engage in further violence. I argue that COs demand to be perceived as law enforcement because they believe that these particular state agents have been given the right to kill with impunity. DEF correctional officers feel as if

they must perform gendered labor activities that gifts captives with bare necessities to maintain a base level of life when their duty should be to kill. COs then turn to the one thing they believe solves this problem: mobility. They take control of movement to assert themselves as more alive than those they oversee, marking themselves hierarchically distinct from incarcerated people and placing their captives closer to death. In doing so, they situate themselves as state agents who take life instead of giving it. In controlling mobility, they obtain the power to kill.

### **Scheduling Mobility, Enacting Dominance**

Before I left for fieldwork, George Mentore reminded me that any decent anthropologist conducting research inside a prison should begin with schedules. He was right, but not for the reasons I assumed. Correctional administrators create lengthy timetables for every aspect of incarcerated people's lives. Wardens, unit managers, and non-security supervisors meet every Monday to discuss the weekly schedule. They parse over new arrivals to the facility, the movement of current occupants, programming needs, and increases in security levels for disciplined men and women. Throughout the meeting, workers banter about mundane aspects of their job alongside gossip about State corrections offices in the capital city. But they also pore over schedules on paper documents and openly declare that timetables ensure safety on the compound. "Without it, we would have chaos," one of the Wardens remarks as he begins to speak about an escape attempt that occurred at a prison in a neighboring state. As the morning passes on, workers facilitate mobility controls through created schedule documents that they then provide to their subordinates. These controls include hourly job duties surrounding movement, housing, and programming meant to create an ambience of stability. Importantly, the perceived stability creates feelings that mark schedules as exercises of dominance and power. It also

demonstrates how notions of efficiency, wrapped in capitalist embraces, are often paired with safety at the DEF.

Scheduling prison work tightly links to labor practices that construct time and space within capitalist expectations. Factory production, plantation systems (with enslaved and indentured labor), and consumer-oriented enterprises in the united states demonstrate a distinction of labor, time, and space underscored by capitalist emphases on machine-like, efficient work efforts (Haines 2017; Singleton 2015; Tarlow 2007). Factory environments relied upon specialized knowledge for production to save labor-time and create market economies, helping to develop mass assembly lines where workers moved in repetitive ways as they performed their specialized task (Rodgers 1974 [2014]; Seltzer 1992). Management and owners oversaw the disciplined, repetitive bodily movement of workers, often literally from a higher perspective, to ensure that everyone remained on task and within disciplined timeframes (Foucault 1977). Plantation systems organized labor in similar manners where a designed panoptic landscape offered planters, owners, and slave masters a domineering gaze over workers and enslaved peoples, often with the excuse of efficiency (Armstrong and Kelly 2000; Bates 2015; Delle 1998, 2014; Epperson 2000; Orser and Nekola 1985). These exploitative labor systems birthed modern punishment practices that effectively incarcerate and imprison “surplus peoples” to both worker and captive contexts (Davis 2003; Gilmore 2007; Hong 2011).<sup>xxxiv</sup>

At the DEF, similar scheduling practices manufacture disciplined feelings about efficiency and safety, but it also places incarcerated people and many workers into a state that Zygmunt Bauman (2002) terms frozen transience – “an ongoing, lasting state of temporaryness, a duration patched together of moments none of which is lived through as an element of, let alone a contribution to, perpetuity.”<sup>xxxv</sup> The punishing architecture, where all prison units are

meant to look the same, and the expectation that every person on the compound move in expected ways due to the division of labor and punishing security levels, creates spaces that can become homogenous and hard to distinguish. The schedule constructs time in blocked moments for every correctional action and is designed to control movement for all people and materials on the compound. As workers deem incarcerated peoples' movements dangerous, the schedule is meant to place Subjects and Objects into their proper locations at all times. These disciplinary tactics can create feelings of permanent temporaryness, where captives and workers cannot seem to find a space to live out more than mere moments at a time, which often creates more threat.

Ms. Cortes explains:

We all like to know where we're supposed to be and what we're supposed to be doing while we're here, but it's also frustrating because it makes the days feel longer and makes me feel like I'm just stuck. You know? You've had to feel it working here before. I used to joke that it's like my life stops when I come to work and I'm in a place that doesn't seem real, except it seems to last a really long time...Everything's supposed to be the same every day. And when one little thing goes off track, it makes you worried and even a little scared. And it's not just COs. It's everyone.

Daily, I witnessed Ms. Cortes and her correctional cohort languish in the temporaryness of DEF labor. COs, bored and feeling time pass slowly, would stare at walls or close their eyes and imagine another location. In security centers, many COs took turns observing captives so that one officer could read a book, play a video game, scroll through their phone, or take a nap. Management strictly prohibits all of these activities and materials, going as far as to terminate employment of COs caught participating in any these actions or carrying these contraband items. But the moment something disrupted the schedule, COs would stand alert, eyes focused, breath constricted. Many COs would begin to perspire, no matter the temperature, if something as small as Count began a few minutes late.

As labor efficiency at the DEF supposedly depends on worker's specialized skills and a rigid schedule, all employees, excluding upper management, work in their prescribed areas and are expected to conduct routinized labor that never allows them to spend "too much time" with captives. Too much time depends on the task at hand. Level IV Educators must teach within a one-hour time-frame, but never speak with one person for more than 15 minutes, lest they rouse suspicion. Nurses and medical staff meet with their patients for approximately 10-15 minutes unless severe injury cannot be ignored. And correctional officers are expected to observe captives, but never speak or be in close proximity for more than a few minutes; they can spend more time with individuals if it is deemed a safety necessity or if they work with detail crews.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Employees perform these tasks within a written timeframe mandated by correctional policies. The scheduled division of labor,<sup>xxxvii</sup> parsed over every week by upper management, facilitates how much time workers spend on each task and their speed of movement within the prison. Workers move from one cell to the next passing out GED papers, prescription pills, or hygiene products, always under pressure to continue their job duties within the allotted time. If anyone slows down or lingers too long, some staff are quick to remind everyone of the written schedule, often retrieving written documents if protest occurs. This process effectively limits interactions between staff and captives as a measure to prevent everyone from spending "too much time" and becoming "too close" while simultaneously naturalizing specific speeds and movements. In this case, time and mobility become interlinked and utilized within asymmetrical power dynamics that severs relations and time itself. When administrators create schedules, they also construct time as organizational units for many people at the DEF. As this occurs, labor becomes even more compartmentalized and repetitive, creating feelings of frozen transience.

As explored in previous chapters, DEF captives categorically occupy spaces where they appear to be less alive and Human, so when COs find themselves feeling too close to incarcerated people, they double-down on notions of their group's necessity on the compound. Making matters worse, correctional officers also worry that the average person, including non-security employees, believes that management can easily replace them because their duties require little skill. In other words, they fear they are as surplus as their captives. Mr. Ponce explains:

COs know that not just anyone can do this job. But everyone else, especially the public, think that we're just babysitters, like paid to make sure that these inmates don't run loose. We do this work because no one else can, and we do it all the time. It takes a certain type of man to do the same thing day in, day out without fucking up...Management and teachers and psych, they think they're better than us. They act like they got all this important shit to do, but they can't do their job without us. We show up and do our job and keep everything on track. We control what inmates do and where they go. We keep everyone safe. We're the people that holds everything together.

As a result of this concern, Mr. Ponce is quick to point out that he once attended college and proudly displays how many training certificates he has received. He also quotes policy to anyone who will listen as a performance of knowledge and a necessity of his position. But the repetition of this work also breeds boredom and restlessness, alongside the concern that others view them as inmate-like. Mr. Alvarado informs:

It gets boring in here. But you want it boring because if something exciting happens it usually means violence and someone getting hurt...But it's draining because you walk the same line, you see the same people, you move so slow. It's exhausting. And we have all these employees looking down on us because they think we live like inmates.

COs firmly believe that assigning individual officers to specified areas to perform hyper-particularized duties makes for a more efficient, and safer, environment. But this division of labor also constructs hierarchies where COs are placed socially and spatially closer to



incarcerated people than the rest of the staff. Because correctional officers rely upon their constructed affective caricatures of both captives and COs, they feel their own sense of aliveness and Humanness slipping through their weapon-filled grasps.

As COs grapple with these feelings, many turn to harassment and violence, in various forms, to assert their dominion and to challenge their hierarchical placement. This often involves disrupting the schedule that so many believe helps create an efficient and safe facility. These disruptions affect DEF staff, but they mostly hinge upon the discomfort and pain of incarcerated people. Some correctional officers prevent captives from attending their programming activities – such as religious or educational services – and others actively divert people from going to their intended destinations, as Mr. Feshad can attest. When they disrupt the schedule in these manners, they upend everyday labor routines that make them feel dispensable. Mr. Alvarado informs:

These teachers and nurses think we only do the same thing all the time. They think anyone can do it. Walk the line, check the cells, open and close the gates. But we have to be aware of our surroundings all the time. Not everything runs like it's supposed to in here. It's up to us to make sure that when inmates end up places they're not supposed to be, to put them back where they belong.

CO concerns about non-security staff perceptions are strikingly accurate. Many educators, behavioral health specialists, and medical workers make snide comments about COs and their intellectual capabilities. They speak with each other about how officers feel the need to segregate themselves from the rest of the staff, but often, when given the opportunity to sit and engage with COs, they choose to avoid these interactions, something I participated in myself as a former employee. On any given day, there are dozens of conversations and even budding friendships between COs and other staff, but most COs keep to their own cohort. So, when correctional officers disrupt the schedule, they assert their dominion over captives, separating themselves from inferior beings,

while simultaneously challenging the very processes that turn them into surplus. When they ignore or upend the written timetable, they declare themselves to be necessary and the most important controls on the compound.

CO harassment often begins with the schedule but moves into expectations of that captives will perform bodily acquiescence and outright physical punishment. In the opening narrative, Mr. Feshad attempts to seek medical care at his regimented time, but he is met by Sgt. Vega and another overseer. He left his unit with the permission of the COs inside and moved as fast as he could across the compound. Unfortunately, Mr. Vega noticed his slow pace and blocked his path with violence. The Sgt. upended Mr. Feshad's scheduled visit and forced him to go to Education, completely ignoring his yellow skin while allowing one more person into the library. The Education building is considered one of the most vulnerable parts of the facility because there is only one correctional officer inside with dozens of people. There is constant talk about how when, not if, a riot occurs, it will start in Education or Chow Hall, and workers have openly looked for escape routes in these areas. In his eagerness to divert Mr. Feshad away from Medical, Sgt. Vega sent him into a building known for crowding and security concerns. The written schedule had Mr. Feshad visiting with a nurse across the compound, but it was actively disrupted.

These small disruptions occur every day throughout the facility. When incarcerated people attempt to travel across the compound, staff, mostly COs, block their paths and divert them from their scheduled locations. In doing so, staff upend daily timetables and demonstrate their complete power over captives' bodies. But individual staff do not disrupt the schedule every day, nor do they focus solely on one person. Instead, it is up to each CO to decide if, and when, they will participate in these actions. Captives must then attempt to arrive to their

scheduled destinations without being blocked by correctional staff because it is the incarcerated person who will be blamed and punished for their lateness or absence. No matter the excuse, captives are to blame for not following the schedule. These asymmetrical power dynamics constantly unsettle incarcerated people because they never know if they will be harassed by staff or miss important meetings, employment times, and visits. The written schedule requires them to be at specific locations, but it cannot determine how staff implement policies. The written code is only as good as the people who perform the labor.

While this harassment shores up feelings of CO dominance, it also serves to unsettle workers and provoke an ambience of perpetual threat. When Mr. Feshad went to the library, the Education CO observed him closely since he was not supposed to be there that day. The librarian worried when Mr. Feshad huddled at a table with three fellow captives. And an educator suspected that the four of them were trying to pass contraband because they sat too close together as they whispered grievances about Sgt. Vega and provided me with stories. The harassment benefits individual correctional officers by making them feel dominant, but it also destabilizes their entire cohort. Workers, already in a state of suspicion, harass people and must then contend with unexpected movements and presences because a CO diverted captives from the schedule, which only serves to create more perceived threats. But, in doing so, individual COs construct themselves as more alive and Human than their captives precisely because they have the power to control mobility. Because, as I described in chapter three, correctional officers on the compound often perceive of themselves as a 'We' more than an 'I', disrupting the schedule simultaneously marks themselves as the most necessary people on the compound and produces the correctional officer as Human.

COs also lash out at staff members whom they feel have belittled them or prove untrustworthy. Importantly, correctional officers do not resort to physical violence, but instead, restrict workers' movements by forcing them to wait at locked doors and gates. Mr. Balboa, a maintenance worker of 14 years, complained that

COs always fuck with me and anyone they don't like. I have to wait at gates for them to buzz me in and sometimes they lock me between locked gates on purpose. They also buzz gates open so quick that I miss the chance to get in and have to wait even longer... That shit makes my blood pressure go up because, it's like, why are you fucking with me? We all have a job to do. Why make it worse for everyone?

When I asked how these actions made it worse, he explained that time seems to slow down at the DEF, and that COs actions make his day feel even longer because he waits for lengthy time periods at locked fences and doors. And correctional officers fully understand that when they control staff movement, they exercise power. Mr. Martín told me through spurts of laughter that

They get so angry when they have to wait at those gates. They get on the radio with pissy tones demanding to be let in. It's so funny to watch them realize that they can't do shit without us letting them in here. We control when and where they go.... Sometimes, they need to be reminded of that.

Numerous officers shared this helpful information with me and I witnessed multiple COs making non-security staff wait at locked gates and doors while they laughed or smiled broadly. It also became clear that the angrier someone gets from being made to wait or being locked inside prison units and unable to move freely, the better COs feel. If staff appeared to be angry because COs restricted their movement, the officers would make them wait even longer. These were training exercises. With time and mobility directly linked at the DEF, power is exercised in these small moments and actions. As someone made to wait at dozens of gates and doors, I experimented with my reactions and the length of time COs delayed my movement and access. Made to stand at locked gates,

sometimes in 110-degree summer heat, I was often extremely frustrated at these practices. The angrier I became, the longer I waited. When I would stand quietly, demonstrating acquiescence, the gates clicked opened within two or three minutes, rather than ten or fifteen. The performance proved extremely important, and COs control of movement served as an exercise of their power.

But these actions also break up a monotonous day for workers in the facility. Some COs feel empowered by their control of staff movement, but others enjoy the play of it all. Made to feel as if they are cogs in an efficient machine, workers pass the feelings of stalled time by making a game of controlled movement. Mr. Alvarado informed that he knows some people become extremely angry waiting at locked gates but that he enjoys seeing how long someone will wait before they display frustration. He makes a note of which staff members last the longest before shouting or scrunching their face. Mr. Ponce picks a random number, sometimes the number of times he twists his apple stem before it falls off, and messes with the corresponding person who comes to his gate. This play unsettles the feelings of frozen transience and makes time pass a bit more quickly, and it also challenges notions that all COs perform the same actions every day and for the same reasons.

When administrators meet to create or approve a written schedule every week, they enact asymmetrical power dynamics that help construct 'threat' on the compound. The schedule revolves around notions that restricted movement equates to a safer environment. Division of labor at the DEF quarters workers, especially COs, within the facility to ensure that all people and everyday objects remain within their proper, security-ranked, places. In utilizing the schedule as a mobility control, administrators

discipline both captor and captive while naturalizing the DEF security level system – a ranking based on restricted movement. But this form of mobility control makes COs feel too similar to incarcerated people and they then harass captives and staff in play or menace as means to distinguish themselves or time itself, but also to construct themselves as Human. As these practices continue, more staff feel unsafe and seek a more scheduled routine based upon the security level system. Unfortunately, feeling safe links to capitalist notions of efficiency that only breeds perceived threat and constant states of suspicion. But without these feelings and practices, COs would have to find new ways to construct and maintain Human in a place built to destroy.

### **Controlling Mobility, Managing Animacy**

Ms. Tapia and Mr. Ponce sat in their assigned security center, listening for signs of impending danger and finishing a 10-hour shift. Their postures displayed absolute boredom – bodies laid back on a small chair, faces tilted towards the dark ceiling, eyes dazed, and legs sprawled – as they sat in the silence around them. Mr. Ponce interrupted everyone’s quiet, as he usually did, and began speaking about how no one respects correctional officers. His voice quivered slightly as he began to pace the small room while Ms. Tapia nodded approval from her seat. “We should be treated like law enforcement because we do what they do. They catch these fuckers, but we have to keep them locked up. And we do it without guns. No cop would do our work because they can’t bring their guns in here with them.” As he continued to pace, his hand clenched into a fist and his breath quickened.

Ms. Tapia continued to nod her head up and down, but she remained in her chair; she was too tired and too mature to be acting like her co-worker. But she agreed with Mr. Ponce. There were numerous little indignities she faced every day as a CO precisely because so many people

believe her job doesn't involve law enforcement duties. But she busted her ass all day, protecting everyone inside and outside the prison compound from these inmates. And she did it all without a gun. She didn't have that added protection and no one seemed to care that she put her life on the line every day. She heard so many stories about how blue lives matter and she watched as cops protected the society, killing criminals when necessary, and rightfully evading legal ramifications for their heroic actions. But her cohort isn't treated the same. She turned her head and spoke to Mr. Ponce, attempting to soothe him with words of wisdom. "Calm down, mijo. We know what we really do. We do the work that no one else can. We walk the line and protect everyone from these fuckers. We do that. Police, they couldn't handle what we do. Those babies couldn't last one minute in here without their weapons." A small noise paused the conversation as both COs froze for a moment and turned to face the direction of the sound. They realized it was just the wind hitting a window on the prison unit. They released the breath they had instinctively held and turned back towards each other to begin discussing how their work remains underappreciated.

Correctional officers view themselves as law enforcement workers who protect innocent people from inherently dangerous "inmates." They feel that their duties are just as important, if not more important, than the average police officer, and yet, they receive little public benefit and admiration for their labor. This desire to be perceived as law enforcement shades their daily life, and it left me with a nagging question: why police? There are a number of other workers that security staff at the DEF could have focused on, such as military personnel, doctors, or firefighters, but most want to be viewed, and treated as, cops. And when this expectation is not met, they become angry and even devastated at the thought that their work is deemed unimportant and unskilled.

I was perplexed by this desire until I came across a group of COs discussing how much they hate providing labor they deem nurturing rather than punitive. These particular COs ranged in ages from 22 to 47 and were self-described Mexican, Chicano, and Caucasian men and women. I observed them sitting inside the sergeant's office looking at an overtime grid and trying to figure out who would definitely have to work another eight hours and who would not. They joked with each other about how so and so would fall asleep if he got hit with overtime, or who would take the most smoke breaks on their next shift. In these moments, their hands remained open, their breath regulated, and their torso and legs swayed towards the person they spoke with. But when the topic changed to the duties required on the next shift – delivering and returning dinner, providing weekly hygiene products, and observing nurses who administered nightly medication – many of their voices became shaky and their bodies more rigid. A lot of the male COs clenched their hands into fists multiple times and both female COs shook their heads from side to side while looking towards the floor. Questions and statement filled the room. “Why do we have to feed these assholes?” “What we really need to do is lock them in for the night and forget that they're there. Better yet, shoot em' all.” “I'm not their mama. Why should I care if they get sick?” “We should really be allowed to handle them the way they need to be treated. One bullet between the eyes and call it a day. That'll solve the overtime problem.” I had also previously observed correctional trainings where COs – wearing camouflage attire with batons, tasers and mace, and sometimes loaded guns, attached to their bodies – pretend to violently accost incarcerated people, remove them from their cells, and throw gas bombs as they tase their captives. Other trainings included shooting practices where COs shot at paper targets to ensure they were prepared to kill, if necessary. Though some of their speech might be discounted as worker frustration, the opening narrative in this section, the talk between these COs, and the



violent training exercises they carry out demonstrate correctional officers' desire to kill the very people they've been tasked to manage: an act they believe is reserved for police officers who are allowed to kill with impunity.

In this final chapter section, I explore the direct link between the enslavement of African peoples during the settling of this country and the acts of contemporary police officers to demonstrate why DEF correctional officers believe that cops have the right to kill specific Others without legal ramifications. As State agents tasked to maintain order, police and correctional officers alike control movement to intimidate, harass, and detain anyone they feel presents a threat – actions birthed through enslavement. I provide evidence that COs utilize mobility to kill their captives through similar practices that former slave patrols utilized in the eighteenth and nineteenth century American south. When COs demand to be treated as police officers, they're requesting the benefits of white supremacy, namely, the right to legally kill those deemed less Human.

### *Policing and Killing the Enslaved*

Policing in the United States manifested through seventeenth century white supremacist enslavement controls directed towards African peoples. Southern plantation owners drew from aspects of the Barbados Slave Code of 1661<sup>xxxviii</sup> that classified enslaved peoples as chattel property, establishing the legal basis for slavery as a means of production in the burgeoning United States (Hadden 2001). With enslaved peoples legally marked as property, land owners in the American south demanded a numerical increase in workers for larger labor profit but quickly became concerned with the new racial landscapes in their settlements. Fear of slave insurrections, whether real or imagined, and the need to control African peoples led white southerners to formulate slave patrols as order-maintenance measures. These patrols – originally

populated through the conscription of poor white men, but within one generation consisting of volunteer white peoples from diverse social backgrounds – developed to “curtail black mobility, punish minor affronts to white supremacy, and guard against the ever-present threat of black insurrection (Burton 2015: 42).” These patrols organized white populations to police and terrorize Black peoples by checking their movement and ownership papers, invading their homes, and brutalizing and killing any Black person for any reason, or none at all, for over 165 years. They ensured that Black peoples, both enslaved and free, remained hyper-visible, lived with restricted movement, and faced daily terror. But patrols also served to reinforce enslavement as *the* economic foundation in the American south and constructed a linear temporality where white supremacy remained naturalized through all time.

white peoples residing in southern cities shared some of these same concerns, but they also needed a more mobile Black population who could work in industrial production. Patrols in these locations borrowed many of the tactics from plantation systems, but also produced new forms of social control, including chain of command hierarchies and arming patrols with new weapons (Reichel 1999). Simultaneously, whites in northern cities, undergoing industrialization, began centralizing police departments through city managements. These officers served at the behest of the political machine in power and openly existed through patronage practices. In these contexts, police came to represent social control and political power. But the creation of policing throughout the United States did not come to fruition in a unilinear fashion, nor did it exist in isolation. Individuals from rural and city locations, both north and south, learned policing tactics from each other and implemented controls that worked for their particular contexts. However, all policing stemmed from slave patrols in the American south.

With the passage of the Black Codes during Reconstruction, the perceived perpetual threat of slave rebellions transformed into naturalized Black criminality, serving as processes of re-enslavement (Alexander 2010; Blackmon 2008; Burton 2015; Davis 1998). Police in southern states, often members of and working with the Ku Klux Klan, harassed and arrested Black people, sending re-enslaved individuals to judges who would sentence many of them to jail and peonage labor (Williams 2007). During jim crow, local police forces selectively patrolled 'Black communities' to enforce vice laws that further linked Black bodies with inherent criminality. Throughout the 1930s, the FBI began to report crime statistics for the united states (not just the south) in its Uniform Crime Reports.<sup>xxxix</sup> Because police selectively enforced and patrolled majority Black areas, crime and race were now linked through supposedly scientific objectivity (Muhammad 2010). When the social justice movements of the 1950s and 60s disrupted these racist practices, white people turned to incarceration to maintain racial hierarchies in america (Alexander 2010).

Historically, citizens of the united states utilized imprisonment as a form of punishment, but mass numbers of individuals were not placed inside prison compounds nor were they forced to live under long-term correctional control after incarceration (Johnston 2000). Beginning in the mid-1970s the prison population in the united states began to increase at an exponential rate. This boom occurred after numerous civil rights movements interconnected with a multiplicity of personal and collective anxieties about social status, desire, and property in a crescendo of contested spaces and negotiated identities. Like many social justice movements of the past, this social upheaval challenged white supremacist and sexist ideologies (among others), but it also amassed hostility towards people labeled non-normative, including darker-skinned peoples, women, queers, the differently (dis)abled, and those who had access to fewer resources. As new

populations, in the Foucauldian sense, manifested through feelings of subjectivity and the ‘discovery’ of ‘natural truths’ about ‘human nature,’ categorical persons became managed and regulated through cellular technologies of power (Foucault 1977). Furthermore, austere economic policy implementations from the 1980s to present day, entangled with order-maintenance discourses to create an ever-increasing demand for Subjects that could be controlled through ‘rehabilitative’ punishment techniques. These included the use of solitary confinement as a way to prevent physical violence inside prison compounds and to coerce individuals into regulating their behavior through isolation and constant visual observation (Harvey 2005; Rhodes 2005). Finally, surplus peoples, disproportionately black and brown, became marked for death through biopolitical and necropolitical practices often rendered invisible by criminal (in)justice ideologies (Agamben 1998; Foucault 1978; Hong 2011; Jackson 2013; Lamble 2013; Mbembe 2003). These intricate State violences enmeshed to form the modern prison-industrial complex in the united states – systems that reconstruct and reinforce white supremacy. And as Joy James makes clear, “The most visceral and physical manifestations of state violence is police or military violence (quoted in Williams 2007: xi).”

Correctional officers at the Desert Echo Facility do not claim to know these histories,<sup>xi</sup> nor do they speak openly of slavery or white supremacy, but they pay careful attention to media images, both televised and print, of race and criminality. Everyday conversations include topics such as the weather, overtime, low pay, and family issues. But COs often end such discussions to speak about the dangers of rising crime and racial politics through the lens of law enforcement. Many of these COs would turn from laughing beings with unclenched hands and faces to individuals with gritted teeth, tight fists, and voice-shaking anger as they despaired about gangs, drugs, murders and public hatred for law enforcement. Because State policy prohibits electronic

devices inside the prison, many COs read newspapers while on duty (though this is officially against the rules) and pored over their phones while on a break. Most days, COs would engage each other about causes of crime (bad parents, welfare, and lack of god-fearing people being the most common conclusions). But the most animated discussions occurred when perceptions of crime entangled with deaths of police officers.

Beginning in 2012, the Movement for Black Lives focused further attention on police killings of Black peoples across the united states and demanded structural changes to the racist foundations of this country. My fieldwork timeframe overlapped with police officers murdering hundreds of Black people, but names of specific victims from 2013 through 2016 garnered national attention: Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Rekia Boyd, Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray, Tamir Rice, Alton Sterling, and Philando Castile. This small and incomplete list (because there are too many to name in this moment) demonstrates how police violence towards Black people remains disproportionately high (Burton 2015; Chaney and Robertson 2013; Cush 2013; Fletcher 2014; Gabiddon 2010; Gabiddon and Greene 2013; Karenga 1993 [2010]; Mathias et al. 2017; Robertson 2014; Staples 2011; Tonry 2011) and how refusing to prosecute law enforcement workers who murder Black people demonstrate that white lives matter more (Crenshaw 2011; Solarzano et al. 2000; Yosso et al. 2009; Zuberi 2011). Media intermingles with criminal (in)justice systems to recreate and perpetuate racist narratives of inherent Black criminality and subhuman status, upholding white supremacy – from minstrel shows (both recent and historical)<sup>xli</sup> that mark Black peoples as inferior and criminal Others, to juries refusing to convict law enforcement for their racist violence (Dixon 2008; Donner 2014; Feagin 2014; Fukarai and Krooth 2003; Leverentz 2012; Oliver and Fonash 2002; Oliver et al. 2004; Patton 2008; Walker

2011). For all intents and purposes, police officers are allowed to kill with impunity as long as they target individuals from killable populations.

At the DEF, most incarcerated people are brown-skinned and identify as Mexican American/Chicano and Indigenous more than African American, but COs still construct these same groups as killable peoples even though many hail from their same identity backgrounds. Denise Ferreira da Silva (2007) asserts that because racialized peoples often inhabit spaces constructed as outside the law, violence becomes temporally naturalized in these spaces. As prisons are already marked as spaces outside of society and therefore most legal structures (Davis 2003), and are filled with mostly Brown and Black peoples, DEF correctional officers mark their workplace as a site of inherent violence precisely because most incarcerated people, like other enslaved populations, have been racialized in the United States as a perpetual threat. Coupled with COs' own construction of their captives as threat itself, security staff place incarcerated people into the killable category through crime talk and papered discipline – efforts that separate the mostly brown-skinned CO and captives into those who deserve the benefits of white supremacy and life itself, and those who do not.

### *Crime Talk and Dead Abstractions*

As already noted, crime talk at the DEF is ubiquitous, but further examples provide evidence that these speech acts serve to immobilize incarcerated people and mark them as less alive than correctional officers. I will focus on two specific observations and conversations between COs and captives that emphasize this argument.

Ms. Tapia labored as a work detail CO for six months. She hated most of her time outside because the heat neared unbearable temperatures and the State uniform she was required to wear was made for a male body. Sweat dripped from her face and her body slouched under the

weight of her soaked uniform, but she always focused attention to ensure her captives labored continuously. She often screamed and cursed at them whenever they took a moment to catch their breath or wipe sweat from their foreheads, and constantly called them “inmates,” “fuckers,” and “babies.” Most of her speech was flat but when she used these slurs, her tone shifted and became more melodic. The men and women hated her and often joked about her wanting to be a man, fueling Ms. Tapia’s disgust. Most importantly, when she became overwhelmed with the heat or tasks of her own labor, she would yell at them about crimes she had heard on the national, not local, news. The stories that captivated her attention disproportionately featured Brown and Black people as perpetrators of murder and child sex abuse. “Don’t think I don’t know what you are, inmates. Fucking child fuckers and murderers.” While I will speak about the fascination with these particular crimes in chapter six, what is important now is that when Ms. Tapia felt aggrieved or disgusted, she utilized crime talk to assert power and to place incarcerated people hierarchically beneath her. She also forced one person (who had made no jokes at her expense) to go back to his cell, setting him up to be disciplined further. After Ms. Tapia finished overseeing the work detail, she met with Ms. Cortes at a locked gate and began speaking about how much she hated the captives, concluding that “we should just kill them all. No one would miss them anyway.” Ms. Cortes did not speak as Ms. Tapia continued, “They’re dead already anyway, you know. They don’t have anything to do with society. They did their crime and now they’re locked up in here.” As she shook her head in disgust, she added “There ain’t no future for inmates. They’re in prison.”

One week later, Mr. Alvarado and Mr. Lupe, a 23-year-old Chicano who had been a CO for four years, sat in a security center as they worried over rising crime and the upcoming presidential election. Mr. Alvarado stated that he would have to vote for donald trump because

the democrats are “soft on crime.” Mr. Lupe argued that Hillary Clinton would be weak because she was a woman, and therefore more emotional. But he also spoke about a police officer who had been killed a few months prior and began to pace the small room. “This ‘Black Lives Matter’ shit is fucked up. Black people always want to cry racism and now they have cops getting killed. Who do they think protects them from all this crazy shit?” Mr. Alvarado added, “They’re the first ones to call the cops if any of these inmates come crashing through their front door. Then they love the police!” With fingers gliding over control buttons he said, “it’s just like that shit in there. People want to cry about how they’re treated but they don’t want to do the work of protecting everyone. If they came here, they’d see those cells are nothing but coffins waiting to be buried.” When I showed concern that it sounded like the people under their control were already dead, both men laughed and told me that I need to grow up and “enter the real world.” Mr. Alvarado continued, “Deep down you’re happy these inmates are stuck here with nowhere to go. Stop pretending to worry so much about them. It’s a good thing they’re in here.” They then began speaking about a perceived rise in murders in their home town, though they provided no evidence for this assertion, and muttered that “these inmates are basically dead anyway” because they’re in prison.

This crime talk removes all context from captives’ lives and categorizes them as nothing more than an abstraction of crime itself. Crime talk also marks COs as naturally superior and alive beings who must use violence to curtail the perpetual threat they oversee for the betterment of society. When Ms. Tapia utilizes crime stories to exercise power (stories produced through racist media), she simultaneously places them hierarchically beneath her and constructs them as abstract crime. As a person who views herself as law enforcement, she believes it is her duty to prevent and control crime by any means necessary, including utilizing deadly force. Because she



feels she lacks the power to kill with impunity, she turns to shouting out physically violent crimes at beings already marked as *crime*. When speaking with Ms. Cortes, she notes that incarcerated people are dead precisely because they are “locked up” in prison, an idea most COs already associate with restricted movement. Through this process, her captives become an immobile concept rather than living beings, directly linking mobility and animacy. And she temporally marks them as dying or dead things because they are stuck in their cells with no future. She’s killing them through speech that is underpinned by mobility assumptions. But she’s not alone in this practice. Mr. Alvarado and Mr. Lupe perform similar actions when they obsess over media reports of criminality and relate prison cells to coffins. Both COs blame Black activists for causing violence towards police officers, an argument grounded in notions of inherent Black criminality. Within moments they also directly associated their prison labor with law enforcement work, marking themselves as law enforcement officers who should have the power to kill particular peoples with impunity. When they speak about prison cells being coffins, they position the spaces where people *live* as places occupied by dead bodies, asserting that it’s a good thing their captives cannot leave their cells. It’s also no coincidence that when speaking about these “coffins,” Mr. Alvarado’s fingers continuously glide over the cell door buttons which control movement and keep people inside the “coffins.” By turning captives into abstraction (a crime), they place themselves as the arbiters of justice and mark them as *things* that are “basically dead anyway.” They are dead-like because they are “stuck in their cells with nowhere to go,” which demonstrates a tethering of stasis and death. From this perspective, dead things have restricted movement or do not move. If this is the case, then all incarcerated people, no matter their crime, are dead-like because of their restricted movement. These actions provide

correctional officers with the power to turn living beings into dead-like captives, blurring the line between alive and dead in the process.

### *Papered Discipline*

When Ms. Tapia ordered one captive to leave the work area and return to his cell without completing his job, she immediately considered her options for doling out further punishment. When they do not follow orders to the exact liking of their overseers or when they fail to complete a task, State workers sanction captives through written penalties that can further restrict their movements and increase their sentence length. The excuse given for this penalty is up to the discretion of the officer, and any excuse can be justified. When Ms. Tapia spoke to the Unit Manager where the banished incarcerated person lives, she advised him that the offending person ignored her orders and disrupted work. They both agreed that a write-up was necessary, and they provided the individual with a piece of paper that he was obligated to sign or face further punishment. As Ms. Tapia left the unit, she remarked that she had taught “them” a lesson, constructing the individual captive as the collective “inmate,” and laughed at how “these fuckers may now think twice before opening their mouths now that they’ll be stuck in their cells all day.”

Writing people up occurs because administrators task COs with this duty, but these actions also manifest as a result of security workers’ desire to kill, and they link their mobility assumptions with paper to carry out this violence. In chapter two, I established that bureaucratic paper at the DEF decontextualizes incarcerated people’s everyday lives, turning them into static *things* rather than complex, living beings. As a result, many captives feel these papers painfully vibrate as they slide down animacy scales. They understand the bureaucratic items as the State itself and seek to perform violence through papered destruction of the people who constitute the State. But these feelings and practices also exist within power dynamics between captives and

captors. All correctional workers have the ability to “write someone up” for any infraction, but correctional officers utilize this power more than any other worker group on the compound.

When correctional officers discipline incarcerated people they often laugh and smile as they remark about how the punished person will suffer restricted movement. Ms. Tapia rejoices in the idea that her captive will be “stuck in his cell,” but she is not the only CO to feel elated during punishment. Mr. Mentiroso, a 47-year-old, Mexican-American CO for over ten years, spoke often of his love for writing people up:

When they try to act like they have *juevos*,<sup>xliii</sup> I remind them of what they are...Inmates try to fuck with us all time, so when they fuck up, I write ‘em up (smiling widely). These dumbasses act stupid and then I make sure they can’t go anywhere. They’re in their cells, where they belong...Sometimes all it takes is one write-up and they’re sitting in their cells, wasting away.

Mr. Ponce adds:

I know all the policies to make sure I do the job. And knowing what I know, I can walk into any cell and write-up an inmate. And when that happens, I get this rush. I feel like no one can tell me nothing. And these inmates are just stuck in here, like rotting trash.

These statements demonstrate that many COs understand how paper controls mobility and animacy. When officers punish captives with paper, they restrict movement to make incarcerated people “stuck” in their cells to “waste away” or turn into “rotting trash.” Underpinning this language is the assumption that when something becomes physically immobile, it begins processes associated with death. In essence, the immobilized thing begins to die, and paper immobilizes the captives.

Along with these remarks, I observed dozens of COs writing up people with relative ease and what can only be described as rejuvenation. As long work days dragged on, exhausted COs became more irritable and frustrated with their work environment and duties. Many officer’s bodies would constrict, seeming smaller than when they began their shift, as they sat on a small

chair, quietly staring at the ceiling or floor. When these feelings and practices occurred, officers looked for any reason to use paper as a tool to restrict movement. In many cases, they wrote-up captives for having too many rolls of toilet paper in their cell, for having too many packets of sugar, for placing newspaper over their window as they went to the bathroom or masturbated, and for masturbating in their cells. During the write-up COs would smile and joke with their security partner about how upset the captive would be about the punishment, and after the write-up was delivered, officers would appear more jovial as they fist-bumped and breathed easier; their bodies expanding – chest puffed out, arms at their side with ease, and their faces relaxed. It is important to note that officer's bodily reactions follow specific masculinized power performances guided by the notion that men take up space (Chan and Curnow 2017; Dalley-Trim 2007; Massey 1994). As Ch. 3 demonstrated that male COs find themselves questioning their masculinity because of their restricted movement and gendered labor ideals, the fact that their bodies expand as they control movement demonstrates direct relationships between mobility, gender, and power. But these linkages are troubled when multiple other COs refuse to write captive up because they feel that extra paper creates burdens for themselves. In chapter three, Mr. Alvarado felt uncomfortable whenever he had to fill out paperwork and he's not alone in his concern. I observed 17 COs threatening to write-up captives only to return to their post and sit in silence. These men and women advised that more paperwork caused them more stress and made their jobs worse, because one form often led to COs having to fill out multiple others. Mr. Alvarado asserted that his heart beat faster when he had to fill out paperwork and Ms. Cortes complained this same action made her day feel longer. For these correctional officers, more paper meant more problems. While some COs felt rejuvenated by using paper as a mobility

control, it is clear that power operates from multiple perspectives. And exercising power does not come without consequences.

Paper provides some COs with the ability to restrict captives' movements and in doing so, mark them for death, while simultaneously combatting security workers' own feelings of threat and frozen transience. Because prison administrators create a division of labor that relies upon notions of efficiency and control, security workers feel static and frozen in temporaryness. After punishing people with paper, many officers openly commented about how the day seemed to "move by faster," that "it wouldn't be long now" before their shift would end, and that "it's gonna be an easy day today" because a captive "can't go anywhere." They would make these statements no matter how many more hours they were required to labor at the prison. One CO who wrote up a man one hour into his shift bragged that his day (16 hours of work) wouldn't "feel that long today." For many COs, paper solves the problems of frozen transience and the desire to kill.

Paper as a tool for punishment also has a strong white supremacist history, and its relationship with enslavement cannot be overstated. white overseers required their captives to possess paper movement passes and slave patrols could demand an enslaved person's pass at any time (Parenti 2003; Spruill 2016). As white fears of 'slave insurrections' mounted, whites utilized paper passes to restrict and control enslaved people's movements, simultaneously calming their anxieties while constructing notions of naturally immobile 'slaves.' Because mass incarceration is a more recent configuration of racialized enslavement (Alexander 2010; Davis 2003), the power of bureaucratic paper to control and punish must be recognized as a white supremacist slavery tool. When correctional officers utilize paper to allay their own fears and to

mark their captives as closer to death, they participate in racialized violence that links colonial and contemporary enslavements in the united states.

### **Consequences**

Because COs feel too close to captives and worry that they are surplus people, they utilize mobility to quell feelings of frozen transience, assert their dominion over the men and women under their control and other workers, and situate incarcerated people closer to death as they attempt to gain the power to kill with impunity. But these actions take a toll. The constant crime talk overwhelms most officers and creates an ambience of threat that only perpetuates COs hyper-focus on movement. This talk also constructs worlds that contain little solace for everyone involved while supporting assumptions that racialized Others remain nothing more than crime itself, constructing portraits of incarcerated people as less alive than correctional officers. When COs turn to papered discipline, they simultaneously manage animacy scales, placing themselves at the apex, while diminishing feelings of temporaryness and replaceability. But all of these actions often require more labor than the average CO can handle. Most COs find themselves in a cohort with other officers who collapse from exhaustion, suffer from addiction, and turn to further violence.

As previously described, most correctional officers at the DEF work 16-hour days and many believe they will die by the age of 60. The burden of this labor spills out of the prison compound and into their daily lives. Many COs, like police officers, suffer from mental illnesses and display high rates of substance abuse and domestic violence (Friedersdorf 2014; Lopez 2014; Spinaris et.al. 2012; Valentine et al. 2012). During my research tenure, I observed numerous COs participating in alcohol binges (outside of work), where they would imbibe as many as 10 beers in the course of an average evening. Multiple officers also were stopped by

police for erratic driving (and let off with a warning) or received DUIs. Numerous correctional officers were accused of domestic violence, though accusations were never enough to remove them from their work position. Dozens of COs scream (and some even physically attack) their children when they do not follow orders to their liking. And one CO attempted suicide at a busy highway intersection because he could no longer handle the work hours after his wife began divorce proceedings. On the job, correctional officers do not just exhibit signs of exhaustion and long-term alcohol abuse, they often feel overwhelmed at threats lurking around every corner. Painfully, they can only share these concerns with other COs, making them feel isolated from non-security workers and their families. Mr. Feshad's words prove wisest when he states that "COs are fucked up by this place too."

But it's DEF captives who suffer the harshest consequences for COs' labor. They understand the power of crime talk and the punishment of paper because they live the consequences of these productive qualities. Their lives become decontextualized, their movement remains heavily restricted, they become marked as less alive than everyone and everything around them, and time becomes even more punitive by slowing down and generating feelings of temporaryness. The captives know that, in many people's perspectives, they are transformed into abstract Objects as opposed to living and complex Subjects. After all, it is Mr. Feshad who is being maneuvered from one place to another while yellowing from an unnamed disease, which COs ignore precisely because, as a captive, he's already situated closer to death. Though correctional officers struggle with capitalist expectations of efficiency and masculinist performance ideals, they directly enact violence toward a group of people held in bondage by their actions. Correctional officers need the work to support their families and deeply believe they keep society safe through their painful labor, often imagining that they will help create a

society free from crime. But in this context, crime has also come to mean the very captives under their control. So, in performing their work to create a better society, they imagine the deaths of hundreds of people. These men and women are State employees overseeing enslaved peoples. Despite the fact that prison administrators maneuver CO bodies through the production of paper schedules and many unnamed correctional officer diseases remain ignored, DEF security workers benefit (as do most readers) from the continual racialized and gendered punishment directed towards their captives.

When COs participate in crime talk and papered discipline, they wield the power to kill but not with impunity. Correctional officers suffer for the power they desire and perform, even as they feel closer to becoming the white, male Human they wish to be. The mobility assumptions to which most COs adhere are constructed within white supremacist and misogynistic histories that inhibit many DEF security workers' daily lives. Though COs deny that incarceration is a reconfigured form of enslavement in the United States, they bear witness to thousands of darker-skinned peoples being held as State captives – people who often look and sound like them. Concerned they are too much like the men and women they oversee, COs worry that they too are expendable, imprisoned beings. Because correctional officers have constructed incarcerated people as decontextualized things closer to death than life, these same security workers try to reposition themselves as close as possible to whiteness and masculinity to distance themselves from their captives and their social positions outside the prison. But it doesn't work. Many correctional officers get sick and live inside prisons for most of their workdays. DEF correctional officers do not do the work no one else can, but rather, have been socially positioned to do the undesirable labor of performing enslavement tasks for State administrators. And they know it.



## **Chapter 5** **Moving Scents and Controlling Animacy**

Mr. Gujerda, a Mexican-American CO for five years, hated the smell of inmates. He was sick of looking at them and hearing their movements echo in the prison unit, but it was their smell that made him want to beat them with fists until nothing was left but fleshy pulp. Every day their bodies moved past him as they made their way to their cells, and he would get a strong whiff of their stench. Inmate scent was hard to describe, but he knew it when he smelled it. They stank of dirtiness and rotting skin coupled with sweaty armpits and old shit. Worse, inmate stench seemed to linger long after they were gone. Their cells fumed, and prison units became spaces where their smell overpowered CO bodies. The air circulation in all prison units prevented continuous fresh air from coming inside, so all that was left to breathe was inmate.

But today, Mr. Gujerda was going to do something he enjoyed. The schedule called for numerous shakedowns throughout the compound. This meant that he and his CO partner would enter cells, look through all the inmate's items, and take away anything deemed inappropriate or contraband. During shakedowns he always found extra hygiene items that the inmate should not possess, so he confiscated them. He would also take their letters and paperwork, advising them that they could fashion weapons out of these items. All of these materials were to be thrown in the trash and he aggressively warned inmates that they knew the rules and should not hold onto excess objects. He enjoyed seeing the anger overwhelm inmates' faces and he was really pleased when they would try to challenge his authority. In these moments, he would order them to trash their materials and he couldn't help chuckling out loud as they begrudgingly did as they were told. But he also enjoyed shakedowns because inmates were forced to clean their cells after COs stormed into them. He ordered inmates to use the cheap chemicals provided by third-party vendors to cleanse units of the inmate filth, hoping their stench would finally be eradicated. He

knew some inmates would be angry; they always were. So, he coupled this cleaning order with write-up threats. The inmates always did what they were told. After all, what other option did they have?

After the shakedown and cleaning finished, Mr. Gujerda walked into one cell and inhaled deeply, careful to breathe inside the cell only for a few moments. The inmate stench still clung to the walls and seemed to hang in the air. Angered, and his heartbeat racing, Mr. Gujerda ordered the inmates to begin the cleaning process all over again and told them not to stop until the smell was completely gone. He kicked the trash bag that contained the previous inmate's materials as he exited the cell and yelled that they should get "rid of this shit, now." He felt satisfied that all inmates would do the work they were supposed to. But as he walked past more cells, he smelled inmate stench once again, and he felt disgust. He crinkled his nose and held his breath, patiently waiting until they would disappear like all the others.

DEF correctional officers often complained about incarcerated peoples' "stench." They would speak at length about their bodily smells and many demanded that I take notes about the "stink coming from inmate cells." I was automatically curious about this supposed captive stench because I felt that most of the odors came from the prison materials rather than the men and women held in bondage. When I first arrived at the compound, I was taken aback by the overpowering smell of cheap chemicals and what seemed to be dirty, wet paper towels. As I moved through the units, I also became very aware of the sterile air pumping through metal circulatory systems. While I smelled sweat and body odor, it was not something that overwhelmed me. But COs took me frequently to different spaces in prison units and waited for a reaction from me that did not come. They would smirk and look at each other and then lean toward me as if I was being let in on some big secret. And COs were not the only ones worrying

about smell at the DEF. Incarcerated people also showed hyper-concern for and about their body odor, the smell of specific materials, and obtaining hygiene items that produced pleasant smells. Daily, DEF captives complained about access to showers and the putrid, rotten-smelling food. They also sought out shampoos with fruity smells and soaps that produced “fresh” aromas. And then there were the few people who refused to shower or flush their toilets, releasing a foul odor that I can sometimes still feel inside my nostrils.

For the first few months of fieldwork, I tried to note the different smells at the DEF and group them according to CO and captives’ categories. But problems quickly arose because I didn’t always smell what they wanted me to. For instance, I often misidentified what COs called “inmate smell” as olfactory phenomena produced by everyday materials rather than people’s bodies. I never smelled the strong stench of everyday captives (other than the few who refused to bathe and flush their toilets) in the ways some correctional officers described. I also rarely smelled the sweet aromas that many people attributed to foods – such as soups, tuna fish, and spice packets with the intensity they expected. Complicating matters, there was never a complete consensus on or about smell categories, nor was there complete agreement on the causes of smells. What did become apparent was the power of smell and its many uses across the compound. Smell was not just a physical reaction where molecules traveled to nasal receptors in bodies – the most common biological explanation for how humans smell the worlds around them (Reinarz 2014). Something else was in the prison air.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that DEF correctional officers and incarcerated people pair mobility with smell to place themselves and others within animacy categories. Many COs already understand prison cells to be similar to coffins: places where dead or dying things are stored. As these “things” are stored and rendered immobile, many COs must find ways to turn

living beings into lifeless bodies. These correctional officers use smell to create taphonomic death processes to situate incarcerated people as dead and decomposing things (Dawdy 2006; de León 2015). For some, these smells become so powerful that they often cannot wash it off their bodies even after they leave the prison, so they attempt to eradicate and contain the stench by restricting movement. Correctional officers demand that captives remain in their cells not just because of safety concerns, but more often than not, because “inmate smell” travels with incarcerated people. And because mobility is tightly linked with animacy at the DEF, COs feel they must do the maintenance work of ensuring that less alive/dead things don’t move, including their smells. In essence, these men and women try to create an ideal world where their animacy hierarchies make sense. In doing so, they construct a blurry divide – hazy but distinct – between alive Subjects and not-alive Objects on the compound, that placates their troubled mobility and sensory assumptions.

I then show how incarcerated people rely upon smell to feel alive and mobile though they remain in their small cells. Many captives use and share everyday hygiene objects and, in doing so, create feelings of movement through the scents borne of these synesthetic objects and themselves. In doing so, they form community in a place designed to disappear and establish hierarchies between themselves and individuals whom they deem to be Other. As they create these communities and generate movement, they upend their confinement, disrupt correctional assumptions, and reconstruct animacy hierarchies. Through these practices, many lay claim to their aliveness and demonstrate that they do not just exist in deathscapes as people living bare lives (Agamben 2003). But these novel practices often come at the expense of those whom they consider less than or non-human.

## **The Power of Smell**

The olfactory sense troubles at the Desert Echo Facility. Smells invade spaces, ignoring constructed borders as they linger and dissipate often before someone can understand why and what just happened. DEF scents have been known to insinuate themselves into enculturated worlds, upending naturalized notions that simultaneously open pathways for new understandings and conflicts. Sometimes, smells generate memories of freedom and collectivity. Other times, they mark danger and disgust. And while context matters for anthropological exploration, the usage of bodily senses, and specifically smell, as a means to create meaning and to distinguish between people and things, life and death, is nothing new.

In many ‘western’ contexts, smell has historically been closely related to animals and women (Classen 1992). Many european philosophers also believed this ‘lower’ sense, often paired with touch, to be less useful and often unreliable for scientific endeavors because it remained incalculable and poorly understood – similar to conceptions about women and other ‘uncivilized’ beings (Stewart 2005). Smell was commonly singled out as the most dangerous and untrustworthy sense due to its amorphous, transgressive, and intangible qualities. But despite these smelly suspicions, eurocentric peoples utilized scent and olfactory constructions to produce many aspects of modernity through colonial discourses and practices. During the eighteenth century, medical narratives began to center on foul smells and dangerous airs as possible causes of disease and decay (Chiang 2008; Haines 2018).<sup>xliii</sup> Many medical professionals diagnosed illnesses based upon stench patients came into contact with, and often asked the afflicted to inhale flowery and spiced smells as remedies. But because many europeans believed these “bad airs” to be sources of illness (linking these diseased airs with stagnant water and decomposing matter), they crafted new colonial projects to cleanse lands of what they described as foul odors

and a lack of order.<sup>xliv</sup> Odor and order became linked within progressive teleologies, where supposed primitive peoples overemphasized the olfactory sense or did not possess a sophisticated sense of smell because they lived with aromas deemed stench by europeans (Huang 2016; Reinartz 2014).<sup>xlv</sup> These foreign ‘foul’ smells often arose because of work practices, eating habits, and living arrangements that differed from many europeans’ everyday lives. With these beliefs, it became a modern colonial mission to deodorize and re-odorize public and private spaces across the globe.

european colonizers and united states settlers incorporated many of these olfactory assumptions into the so-called ‘new world’ but innovated with novel racialization processes. whites declared that enslaved Africans emitted odors that proved their subservient and primitive status (Smith and Palmer 2008). Nineteenth-century Chinese immigrants were believed to transmit diseases because they smelled of different food products and work practices (Chiang 2008). american racists often described former enslaved and Indigenous peoples, and their descendants, as creatures who smelled because of their natural proximity to animals. And with the one-drop rule fully ingratiated into many american contexts, sight could no longer be fully trusted when determining one’s race. Segregationists repeatedly demanded that everyday whites, and their legal systems, pay careful attention to the average person’s smell in order to determine their race (Smith and Palmer 2008). This command assumed that all non-white peoples, and especially darker-skinned individuals, naturally emitted a foul stench that whites could smell clearly because they maintained a civilized nose.

Never removed from the science of the day, many nineteenth and twentieth-century anthropologists based some of their social evolutionist ideas about so-called primitive peoples on the fact that their research subjects utilized or relied heavily upon the olfactory (Classen et al.

1994; Reinartz 2014).<sup>xlvi</sup> Within these narratives, anthropologists often argued that people who emphasized smell were beings who lacked intellectual capabilities that civilized euro-americans possessed. Interestingly, the ‘primitive’ peoples who stressed smell were also beings who didn’t move correctly – from their migration patterns and bodily gaits to their overall subsistence and kinship arrangements. These arguments excused colonizing violence that so-called ‘western peoples’ both participated in and perpetuated, while also naturalizing racist and sexist sensory assumptions. But many contemporary olfactory scholars now attempt to demonstrate that smell should not be placed within sensory hierarchies nor ignored in favor of sight, but rather, understood as embodied practices that generate, produce, and maintain identities, nationalities and citizenship, self and other distinctions, place-making practices, and asymmetrical power dynamics (Almagor 1987; Classen et al. 1994; Jackson 2011; Lee 2017; Moeran 2007; Montsion and Tan 2016; Pandya 1993; Powlowska 2014; Reinartz 2014; Sutton 2010; Telle 2002).<sup>xlvii</sup> These studies attempt to de-essentialize smell by demonstrating the cultural labor of creating and destroying distinctions of people and objects, life and death, moral and immoral.

At the Desert Echo Facility, many correctional officers utilize olfactory knowledge production to create distinctions between themselves and their captives. They do this by rigidly controlling physical movement and access to hygiene materials. As described in the preceding chapters, DEF prison administrators often excuse rigid movement regulations as the most important safety feature on the compound. By now, I have demonstrated that restricted movement is less about safety and more about the power to control, designate, and kill. But correctional officers, whose bodies are the sites for mobility controls at this facility, rarely express these sentiments and find themselves feeling powerless and too similar to their captives

as a result of prison policies. And when smell becomes another sense that restricts movement, correctional officers perform more violence because they cannot shake prison from their bodies.

### *Deodorizing and De-animating 'Inmate'*

Smell acts as a disrupting force at the DEF because it blurs COs' animacy distinctions. Like the European invaders and settlers of the four preceding centuries, DEF correctional officers adhere to olfactory assumptions that place specific Others, both Subject and Object, within animacy hierarchies. In chapter four, I demonstrated that through their speech acts and punitive actions, COs turn living incarcerated people into *things* closer to dead bodies, with cells acting as coffins. But correctional officers have a problem: according to their cultural constructions dead things don't move, so they rely upon rigid mobility controls to make sure that their dead-like captives move as little as possible. Most COs also desire to be gifted the benefits of white supremacy and have aligned themselves with misogynistic and sexist assumptions about themselves and others. Smell enmeshes with bigoted ideals, when many COs utilize odor as a means to exclude incarcerated people from the category of living Subjects, and attempt to contain the "inmate smell" to prison cells. And according to their cultural constructions about death processes, dead or dying things decompose – going through putrefaction phases that bring forth foul odors. Once this is complete, the thing no longer smells, and most evidence of its existence dissipates.

But problems arise when captives don't decompose and instead spread their living smells across the compound, leading many COs to create taphonomic processes that coincide with their naturalized assumptions about death and decomposition. I follow Shannon Lee Dawdy's (2006: 719) understanding of taphonomy as a social process that "describes the complexity, the mix of accident and manipulation, the silences and erasures, the constraining structures, and the sudden



ruptures that all go into the creation of history and the formation of the ‘ethnographic present’” to demonstrate how DEF COs turn alive beings into dead-like things. I have already discussed the first steps in the previous chapter: render captives as immobile as possible because physical movement signifies aliveness and speak about and treat prison cells as coffins. Once COs participate in the creation of this construction, they then turn to continual speech acts that stress the stench of their captives to create a putrefaction process. Finally, they attempt to eradicate all incarcerated people’s smells, demonstrating that the dead-like thing is, in fact, no longer alive and hopefully, past the decomposition phase.

In a scientific euro-american context, researchers assert that there are four or five stages of human decomposition: autolysis or self-digestion, bloat, active decay leading to advanced decay, and skeletonization. Autolysis begins immediately after death when bodily cells begin to rupture and enzymes consume particulates. Blisters may form on the skin and bodily organs and some skin slippage occurs. During the bloat stage, leaking enzymes produce gases and bacteria and other microorganisms generate foul odors that cause putrefaction. Once active decay and advanced decay begin, the body liquefies and loses most of its mass. In the final stage, skeletonization occurs, though some cartilage and skin may remain unless removed. DEF correctional officers do not claim to know the complete scientific processes of decomposition, but they do understand that dead bodies begin to rot, stink, and disappear. While skeletons may remain, they are for most people out of sight, out of smell, and of touch. Most officers (or people generally) have never seen a human body fully rot, but they have seen numerous images of taphonomic processes in television shows, movies, and internet web searches.

Alongside their talk about how incarcerated people are “rotting away” in cells/coffins (as described in the last chapter), many officers speak about the smells emanating from captives’

bodies and living quarters. “It stinks like rotting meat in there.” “Have you smelled the funk on these inmates today? They smell like death.” “The stank is strong with this one (a play off a popular Star Wars line).” “Those fucking inmates need to hurry up and disappear.” Statements and rhetorical questions like these seem endless when sitting with more than one CO, and even though some officers did not participate in this language, they never confronted or disagreed with those participating in these verbal acts, making them complicit. This language permeates the prison compound and creates feelings amongst the security staff that there is something rotting in the halls of the units.

Try as I might, I never fully smelled the terrible odors that many COs associated with death processes, though I did come across some unpleasant smells. Correctional officers would often ask me how I got so (spatially) close to captives without heaving from their gross odors. They would also accuse me of liking the smell, with a few officers insinuating that I must want to have sex with incarcerated people if I “liked their smell so much.” Interestingly, these were the COs who liked me the least (to put it kindly). Every so often, I would catch an odor that I could not place, something terribly foul. In these moments, I wondered if I was sensing what so many COs spoke of. But these scents were fleeting, and I was never able to pinpoint how the smells came to me. When I asked about this phenomenon, Mr. Ponce told me that if I stayed at the prison long enough, I would become more attuned to “how this place smells and who these inmates really are.” With these words, Mr. Ponce connected smell to knowledge production and “inmates” to the physical structure of the prison. In this linkage, captives become the prison and vice versa, meaning that the odors in the units, the corridors, and across the entire compound were “inmate smells,” no matter their actual source. The captive embodied the prison itself.

Mr. Ponce was just one of multiple officers to construct the linkage between captives' movement, smell, and the embodied prison. Approximately 15 COs spoke of how the prison felt alive when incarcerated people moved "too much." They also worried that the prison had its own smell, with Ms. Tapia stating that the "prison will get you if you don't watch out." And Mr. Gujerda advised that the only way to get rid of the prison smell was to "put a bullet in every one of these inmate's heads." For multiple COs the prison is alive in ways it should not be. In chapter two, I demonstrated that many people felt supposedly inanimate materials moving, signifying aliveness. COs also feel supposedly inanimate things moving, again signifying aliveness, but these manifestations occur because of how smell and mobility become interlinked at the DEF. They feel smell moving and attribute it to something that shouldn't be alive: their captives. They already participate in many actions that turn people into dead-like things, so when incarcerated people and their smells continue to move, their animacy hierarchies begin to wobble. So, prison smells – including but not limited to bodies, foods, everyday materials, climates, and sanitation practices – become embodied as "inmate smell," generating the means to eradicate the odor problem. That is, contain the captive, control the odor. Mobility becomes even more important across the compound.

But the smell cannot be contained permanently by rendering captives immobile, leading many COs to demand that people repeatedly clean their cells and units. As Mr. Gujerda's narrative describes, COs yell at captives, bang on their cell's doors, and even perform unscheduled shakedowns to force them to deodorize their living quarters. Some officers observe individuals as they wipe down their toilets, walls, and sitting areas (many with anger, many with smiles on their face). A few COs demand that their porters clean the units multiple times per day. And a handful of officers, like Mr. Gujerda, write-up people for not cleaning fast enough or

being “too dirty.” They don’t write this excuse on the form, but rather, write-up the person for their poor attitude or for having too many materials. By forcing the performance of these sanitation tasks, correctional officers attempt to remove the “inmate smell” from the prison through the labor of the very beings they believe cause the smell and whom they believe *are* the prison. By compulsively forcing people to clean and deodorize their living areas, COs complete their taphonomic process of removing odor and trace evidence that living beings exist in the cells and units. Even though all smells and material evidence cannot be fully removed, correctional officers utilize these forced actions to construct death processes necessary to situate captives as dead-like things. But because the process is never finished, many CO become extremely agitated and lash out in more paper write-ups, crime talk, de-animating language, and forced labor.

*Smelling Captives, Embodying Prison*

To recognize how scent is born and operates at the DEF, it is imperative to understand what daily activities looks like while living inside an 8-x-12-foot prison cell. Take, for example, the average day for Mr. Ruiz (whom we met in chapter two). Correctional officers bang on his cell door around 6 AM every morning to provide him with his breakfast rations of refried or canned beans, two small tortillas, a cardboard milk container similar to those provided to elementary school children, and some watery oatmeal. This food is delivered on a rubber tray that kitchen workers quickly rinsed with water a few hours earlier. The food and rubber tray odors permeate Mr. Ruiz’s small living space to the point that he complains that he can often smell beans in his hair and a faint scent of rubber on his fingers hours later. Mr. Ruiz usually defecates every morning after eating, and, because the cell lacks an open window or ventilation, the smell of his shit lingers for what feels to him to be hours (though the scent escapes in small cracks underneath the cell door or small holes drilled in the window, and he says one can become

used to their own bodily smells). After he uses the bathroom, he exercises for approximately one hour by doing push-ups, jumping jacks, sit-ups, tricep dips, and running in place. He sweats profusely throughout most of his exercise routine and then tries to clean himself with toilet paper and his days-old towel. His cell now smells like a combination of food rations, fecal matter, sweat, and body odor. It is only 8 AM and he has already performed most of his indoor physical movement for the day inside his cell. He then spends hours folding paper and crinkling plastic to produce artistic creations and then writing letters to loved ones. Around 11:30 AM he urinates in his small toilet and wipes the toilet to keep it as clean as possible, but the smell of his urine hangs in the air. A little after 12 PM COs arrive with his lunch rations which consist of one small sandwich, two packets of powdered fruit punch, and more oatmeal. He takes the fruit punch packets but leaves the rest of the food to sit on the rubber tray. Instead, he opens a packet of tuna he purchased from canteen with his own money and mixes some mayonnaise, mustard, and cup 'o noodles flavor packets in the company-provided plastic tuna cup. He eats his lunch and waits for the COs to come back for the rubber tray. His cell now smells to him like body odor, tuna fish, mayonnaise, urine, and stale air. The CO who picks up his tray comments how his cell “stinks like shit.”

He spends the next three hours in his cell staring out the window, passing kites<sup>xlviii</sup>, and standing near his cell door. At 4 PM, COs open his door and complain about the smell of the cell, lead him out of the unit, and lock him and his seven-member cohort inside a 20-x-20-foot cage where they will leave him for an hour. He takes this hour to run around the caged square about two dozen times and perform pull-ups on the pieces of metal bolted into the ground. The temperature reaches about 90 degrees and he is sweating profusely. Today is not a shower day, so when his hour is up, COs lead him back to his cell where he tries to clean himself with a small

piece of soap (which he purchased with his own money from canteen) and his towel. He lies on his cot for about one hour to take a nap and then masturbates. His dinner rations arrive close to 6:30 PM consisting of a sour-smelling salad, a piece of meat made from pink sludge, and a baked bread item. His cell now smells of body odor, sour food, semen, and dirty clothes. He places the tray in his food port and washes his hands with his soap which seems to create a fresh odor. He lies back on his cot and reads over some letters from home before being let out for tier time at 8:00 PM. During this hour he and his peers trade hygiene items, watch TV, play games, and joke. He reenters his cell at 9:00 PM and prepares for lights out at 10:00 PM. He washes his body with his towel, urinates in his toilet, and lies on his cot. The last thing he sees before he falls asleep is Mr. Gujerda's flashlight beam shining directly into his eyes as he performs his hourly rounds.

Many smells of daily prison life are created through implemented mobility controls and the cheap food and shoddy materials supplied to captives. The odors in Mr. Ruiz's cell exist as a result of the unit spatial constructions that restrict the flow of air and inhibit most people's and things' movement. In turn, these regulated smells create feelings of disgust for many COs who blame their captives for the odors. Mr. Gujerda and many of his fellow correctional officers hate the smell of incarcerated people, as discussed above, which "sits like a cloud" over the facility. Multiple times throughout their day, COs swat at the air in front of their face to move foul odors away from their noses, exit the facility to get some "fresh air," spray freshener they brought from home, and demand that captives clean their units and cells to remove trace 'inmate' odors. These correctional officers constantly expressed concern about how poorly the prison smelled and demonstrated discomfort when people were not inside their cells. COs stated their displayed uneasiness about movement was based upon safety concerns, but more often than not, they were also worried about the smells that came with moving captives.

As previously described, when incarcerated people move throughout the prison unit, they bring scents with them that many COs find foul and offensive. Correctional officers expressed disgust when captives walked “too close” to them because they felt as if “inmate stench” invaded their bodies. In fact, across the compound many COs held their breath when the people under their control moved by them and only exhaled when the captive had passed at least three feet away. When multiple captives walked by COs, many officers took shallow breaths through their mouths to avoid smelling ‘inmate. I witnessed this olfactory tic from 19 correctional officers, demonstrating that it was a common practice amongst many security workers. And inside prison units, COs become agitated when they had to enter cells for any reason other than to perform shakedowns. Many took a deep breath before entering the cell and tried to breathe through their mouths while inside. Some COs did not change how they breathed while walking into a person’s living area, but many still commented on the foul odor of the captive. In these moments, they crinkled their nose and shook their head from side to side often asking me to document the stench in my notes.

Making matters worse, most COs adhere to current dominant conceptions about olfactory processes that permanently link smell and mobility. DEF correctional officers believe that smell molecules travel through the air and into a person’s body, with many arguing that scent occurs because microscopic pieces of people and things enter nasal cavities. When I asked about smell at the prison, one officer even stated that he hates the thought that “some part of these inmates are now part of me.” Within this cultural framework, smells *move* and cannot be completely controlled or contained as they penetrate supposed atomistic beings. This construct leads many COs to argue that incarcerated people should be locked down inside their cells as a means to diminish their smells across the compound. I even witnessed dozens of correctional officers

slowing down the prison schedule to avoid allowing people out of their cell. They would sit an extra few minutes in the security center, complaining about the fact that people were allowed to leave their cell for tier time or to go outside into rec cages, and often force people back into their cells early.

The desire to contain and control captives' smells also stems from concerns about gender. Male correctional officers described themselves as exuding odors of musk, meat products (mostly beef), women (specifically vaginal excretions left on men during sexual activities), and sometimes flatulence. And they advised that women often smelled of flowery or fruity scents, linen, and the kitchen – this usually meant cooking oils, baking materials, and soap. Most women COs described female workers as smelling like the prison (meaning dirt, sweat, and 'inmate') and hygiene products such as soap and wipes, whereas they described men smelling of prison, overall dirtiness, and (sometimes) hygiene products such as deodorant and aftershave. Imagine COs' surprise when I would randomly inhale deeply in attempts to smell what had been described. For the most part, I would catch olfactory moments of these smells. I didn't attribute them to naturalized gender scents, but rather gendered activities. Because COs link mobility and smell, olfactory bodily productions for them become sites at which gender is recreated and naturalized. As described in chapter three, male COs utilize mobility to assert their masculinity at the expense of all women and incarcerated people. In their framework, men should move with little to no restrictions, while women's movements need to be controlled by men. Male COs overlay this gendered mobility construction onto their captives, meaning DEF incarcerated people are hierarchically similar to women who are naturally inferior to men. But smells cannot be contained in the ways many male COs desire. Women and captive's smells move with them, invading their space and sense of self. According to most male COs, men are atomistic beings



who control the movement of particular Others, but they often cannot control when they smell Woman or a captive. In many cases, smell has been culturally linked to sexual desire and reproductive frenzy (Reinarz 2014), but many DEF male correctional officers do not wish to desire most women COs nor the captives around them. Male COs never described female officers as smelling fruity, flowery, or of the kitchen. Instead they described them as smelling of hygiene products (such as laundry detergent and hand wash) and musk. Women COs represented beings somewhere in-between man and women aromas, creating ambiguous feelings for male COs. Women shouldn't smell like men (unless it's the odor of [hetero] sexual activities) which made male COs question their personal sense of masculinity and bodily controls. When smell cannot be utilized to construct a distinct masculinity and heteronormativity, it becomes dangerous. It becomes a threat. And all women and captives alike must be controlled to regulate and decrease threat across the compound. Unfortunately, their smells are not so easily contained. Try as they might, COs cannot fully control gendered stench across the prison compound. Mr. Alvarado explains:

This place stinks. It smells dank in here, like something dying. And everyone knows it. We all have little tricks we do to try to clean the unit. We bring air fresheners. We make inmates clean up as much as possible...But it seems like the only thing that kind of works is staying in here [the security center]. But it still follows you like a bitch in heat.

Ms. Cortes expands:

It's not like the smell is that bad. But it's one more thing to deal with. We have to keep everyone safe and make sure this place runs, but then you have inmate's whining and fucking with you. And we're tired and then there's the smell. It's on you even when you get home...It's like a clingy woman.

Many correctional officers supported these statements with both words and actions. COs often spoke about the filthy or dirty smells of the prison, often describing the smell in derogatory

gendered manners, whereas others openly spoke of ‘inmate’ odors flowing through prison units. And many CO had strategies to deodorize their work environments – including using sprays and fresheners.

But COs most often relied upon authoritarian acts in attempts to reorient scent on the compound. Alongside disrupting the schedule and locking people inside their cells for longer and longer periods, some correctional officers would demand that porters<sup>xlix</sup> repeatedly clean the units and required individual captives to clean their cells on command. At least 25 percent of all officers I observed made these demands. These particular officers would slowly walk by cells and quietly breathe in, their necks turned slightly towards the cell and their eyes closing for a few moments. When they smelled something they deemed inappropriate, many would curl their lips, bang on the cell door, and scream for the captive to “clean their shit.” Most complied, advising that it was easier than “dealing with their [CO] bullshit,” and that “COs have to do these things to us to try to make themselves believe they’re in charge.” And more than half of all observed COs would withhold hygiene products and food items to exert control. These withheld materials included toilet paper, soap, shavers, commissary food products, paper, pencils and pens, seasoning packets, plastic eating utensils, and laundered clothing. While almost every CO I spoke with said they never withheld any material item, I often witnessed these same officers or their peers doing exactly that.

Forcing people to repeatedly clean their living spaces and withholding everyday materials created much of the “inmate smell” many COs said they despised. The cheap cleaning chemicals never fully cleaned any surface and often left a stale, metallic smell that permeated the prison unit. The provided hygiene products (including soap) didn’t release much of a smell at all, but certainly left a thin film on bodies. When COs refused to provide basic living necessities,

captives began to smell sweaty and ‘unclean.’ Furthermore, prison administrators often create bathing schedules that prevent daily showering. Dry air circulates through decades-old systems that disperse dust and spiderwebs. Small rodents and insects leave droppings that cannot be completely cleaned. And the Southwest climate remains arid and hot for most of the year, reaching upwards of 100 degrees for many days throughout the summer and early fall. These interactions produce the smell that COs label as “inmate” and their authoritarian practices exacerbate the threatening odor.

As Mr. Alvarado explained in chapter three, many COs try to situate themselves in security centers or other prison areas that exclude captives (such as ‘A’ building offices and outside smoking areas), but in doing so many officers begin to worry about their own movement restrictions. Male COs already display strong concerns over their perceived lack of masculinity as a result of mobility controls, yet they find themselves holing up in specific locations and trying not to move out of these areas for as long as possible. But prison policies link COs and captives’ movements, because for the latter to leave their cells or units, they need a correctional officer escort. This linkage further unsettles COs when they are forced to smell the people they hold in bondage and move with them throughout the compound. Correctional officers cannot fully control how and when they smell, and many already worry that smelling incarcerated people means a part of the aromatic captive becomes a part of the CO. The division between themselves and their captives becomes even more blurry because to smell captives is to take a part of them inside oneself. And so many COs restrict their own movement as a means to avoid the disruption of the Self (CO)/Other (Captive) divide, but in doing so, they find themselves feeling emasculated by these same restrictions. And when male COs hole themselves up in their secured areas, the everyday prison labor must still be performed. Women, then, pick up the male

slack and do the work that no one else wants to do. Most female COs do not demonstrate the same concern about prison smells, though they talk about how unpleasant it is, and they are usually strict about following prison movement guidelines. Some female COs follow the rules closely to make sure that they don't bring undue attention to themselves, while others openly acknowledge that these work tasks won't be completed without them. As usual, when men cannot be found to do their assigned tasks, it is women who add these demands to their labor load.

In sum, COs utilize a mobility/smell linkage to place their captives closer to dead-like Objects rather than alive Subjects. DEF correctional officers firmly believe that incarcerated people's movements can be controlled, but the smells that travel with captives trouble this belief. While COs can "lock down" people into their cells, they cannot fully control or eradicate captive's smells. Scents and odors move in transgressive manners, leaving the confines of prison cells and invading correctional officer bodies. So, COs utilize smell and mobility to create taphonomic processes that mimic what they believe are the stages of decomposition. But no matter what they do – hiding out, forcing sanitation practices, utilizing de-animating language – captives do not completely disappear. Their bodies and scents remain, upending many correctional officers' perceptions that they are singularly in charge of their bodies and expectations that they are distinct from those under their control. Smell, like the captives, can never be fully controlled.

### **Material Movement and Captive Living**

Mr. Ruiz delicately placed the small shampoo bottle outside Ms. Tona's cell door, moving away quickly so as not to draw the COs' attention. He made his way toward the shower where he would close a heavy, caged door behind him, bracing for the painful echo that always

occurred. He washed his body with soap, closed his eyes for a few moments to imagine himself showering in his home with a beautiful woman, and grabbed the second shampoo bottle he took from his cell. He inhaled deeply, and the small scent of strawberry glided through his nostrils, sending a shiver through his body. He liked this feeling, so he dabbed a nickel-sized amount into the palm of his hand and began massaging his scalp. As he washed, the pain from the echo began to subside and he felt a bit more himself. A shower always made him feel better, but it had little to do with the lukewarm water lightly streaming from the faucet. The smell of the shampoo calmed his breath, and he felt a tinge of relief knowing he was not alone in this prison.

He exited the shower, dried off with his dirty towel, and called for the COs to let him back inside his cell. He had to move quickly to make sure the cops didn't yell at him to move faster or ask why he wasn't already at his cell door. He often wondered how they watched him all the time. They can't possibly be paying attention at every moment. But just in case, he got to his cell as fast as possible and banged on the metal door. This movement created a hollow echo that grabbed at his body and tore at his senses. That sound made him feel as if he didn't exist. This type of echo can only be created with enough empty space, but he was still here. How can this place be so empty if he lived here every day? The door popped open creating another echo and he scurried inside and shut the door behind him. Another echo. His breath constricted once again, and he sat on his uncomfortable cot with his head in his hands. "Go away," he repeated to himself, referring to the feelings the echoes created. As he sat still, his body shivered, his eyes twitched, and anger filled his mouth. He looked up and saw the walls moving, and he began to inhale shallow breaths as his heart pounded in his ears. It was starting again.

He grabbed the shampoo bottle and popped open the lid, quickly inhaling through his nostrils. The light smell covered his body, stopping his shivers within minutes. The smell

traveled to caress his hands and calm his anger. The walls slowed as he felt a warm sensation tingle along his back and move towards his scalp. His breath returned to normal and his heart beat slower until he could scan the room without feeling his eyes twitch. He closed the bottle and placed it inside his hygiene tray, and heard a loud click as Ms. Tona's cell door opened in the unit.

Ms. Tona's body paused as her cell door opened and she shivered from her forehead to her toenails. She hated that feeling, but she smiled when she saw the small shampoo bottle waiting for her. She quickly scooped it into her hand and made her way to the shower as fast as possible so as not to draw attention from the officers. She opened the metal cage door and heard an echo as it slammed shut. The water washed over her, though it was never really warm, and she opened the shampoo bottle the moment her hair felt wet enough for a small lather. She put a dime-sized amount in her palm, making sure not to let any go to waste, and began scrubbing her scalp. The smell of the shampoo wafted over her, calming her body as she imagined herself somewhere far away from this place, back home after eight years in this prison and living with someone who told her they loved her. But she couldn't maintain this feeling too long because the COs would wonder what she was doing in here. They were so paranoid that convicts were going to hide shanks in the shower that they never let anyone stay too long, though no one knew what "too long" meant to every officer. She exited the shower, placing her dirty towel around her body, and moved as fast as possible back to her cell.

Two days later, Ms. Tona prepared herself for rec time. She grabbed her formerly white shirt (now more light-yellow than white due to age and cheap laundry detergent), her towel, and the strawberry-scented shampoo bottle. The COs popped the lock on her tier's cell doors, and she walked with her fellow tier-mates to the cage outside the unit. Once inside the rec area, she

placed the small shampoo bottle on the ground and underneath her towel. She spent 50 minutes running around the small cage, doing pull-ups and shit-talking with Mr. Ruiz. She also tried to avoid Mr. Smith because she worried that he was a Chester. Every time Mr. Smith came near, she held her breath for a moment, waiting for him to pass. When the COs came to take them back inside, Ms. Tona grabbed her towel but left the bottle behind. The CO noticed but didn't seem to care. As she walked back inside the unit, Ms. Tona knew that Mr. Castro would retrieve the bottle when he came out for his rec time. Mr. Castro lived in the unit next door, but they shared the rec cage. As Ms. Tona entered her cell and shut the door behind her, she took a deep breath and smelled the faintest scent of strawberry in the unit. She smiled and felt less confined in her small cell. Ten minutes later another tier entered the rec cage, and Mr. Castro smiled when he saw the shampoo bottle waiting for him.

Similar to the correctional officers in this chapter, many incarcerated people understand scent as a process by which microscopic pieces of people and things enter bodies through nasal cavities with the help of air flow. In the DEF context, multiple captives advised that I should stay away from sex offenders because their "disgusting smell" would get "all up inside me," and many others described the COs as people who liked the "stink of their own shit" because shit is really "what they are." When I asked if these were euphemisms, I was met with laughs and jokes about how much I still didn't understand the prison. Still, dozens of captives would hold their breath when sex offenders came near. These same individuals would also momentarily stop inhaling if COs who treated them poorly moved into close proximity (usually consisting of about three feet). I was also encouraged to participate in these actions usually being told to hold my breath whenever someone labelled an addict or Chester came near. If I didn't do as I was told, many people openly wondered why I was so interested in these particular peoples.

These statements and actions demonstrate that for many DEF incarcerated people, olfactory sensations are not just biological productions by which individuals understand the world around them, but rather, social processes that identify, (dis)enjoin, and hierarchize. When captives advised that I keep away from those labelled sex offenders and addicts, they did so because they worried that I would somehow take inside myself some aspect of these DEF undesirables. When I asked Mr. Daley, a 27-year-old Black captive of over four years, he advised:

We sometimes talk about how you get super close with these Chesters and don't seem to know that they trying to get you on something...That's what they do. They pretend they're not pieces of shit and then they get all up inside you...Eventually, you got they smell on you and everyone knows you for it.

When I asked him if he meant this literally, he mocked me, saying that for someone always asking questions I was never really listening, and replied that “No Chester will ever get inside me. That's why I stay away.” I followed up asking if he worried that smelling Chesters meant that he took a piece of them inside him. He paused for a moment and then replied that he never really thought about it in those terms, but that “to smell something does mean that some part of the thing ends up inside me.” And he wasn't the only one to offer this information. Many people told me that no one can smell without inhaling microscopic pieces of people and things in their world. Some even worried about the air circulation systems in the prison unit because it prevented fresh air from getting to them. If they only inhaled recycled air, they worried that they often took inside themselves parts of those they despised.

This concern led many captives to drill small holes in their cell windows with toothbrushes and other sharp objects they could find in order to access “fresh air.” While these holes were also utilized to pass notes and other contraband to people in nearby cells



and to provide a means to yell out to those passing by their units, creating new airways was one of the primary reasons for this action. COs and other administrative staff considered the holes to be destruction of property and often wrote-up individuals for trying to pass contraband through their windows (even if they never saw them pass anything), but still, drilling holes was a common occurrence. And many incarcerated people spoke openly about how they felt less confined, how their bodies felt better, and how good it felt to know that there was now a way for them to not inhale Chester, addict, or despised CO.

But many of these same captives (approximately 27 in total) would also pause and deeply inhale when specific people and things passed by their cells. This action would occur for only a brief moment and many workers ignored this action or did not notice.<sup>1</sup> These momentary actions also occurred when people were at tier and rec time, sitting in education classrooms and the library, and when they moved across the compound to attend Chapel and visits. In these moments, they would freeze for no more than one or two seconds and slightly tilt their heads with their noses angled. Many of these men and women would also blink slowly as their faces relaxed for a few moments after their head tilt and paused bodily movements. There was very little discussion about these actions between incarcerated people, with only a few commenting about how much they like a certain smell. But many people would begin to joke with each other about living inside a prison and make fun of those they did not like or they despised: COs, sex offenders, addicts.

Shortly after I noted these actions, I remembered a conversation I had with an incarcerated person inquiring about the type of shampoo I use, and observing Mr. Ruiz, Ms. Tona, and Mr. Castro sharing shampoo with each other and their fellow captives. I also watched

as numerous people left soap, toothpaste, and deodorants outside cell doors, inside rec cages and prison unit corridors, and passed them along to each other in education, chow, and gym buildings. As the materials moved within units and across the compound, individuals would keep these items to use for about three days before passing them along to other captives.<sup>li</sup> Even when the contents inside the small bottles were depleted, many continued to share the materials with some even leaving empty containers around the facility and inside their units. I also witnessed multiple staff worrying about bars of soap people took from bathrooms in the education building. One teacher even alerted a CO who quickly removed the hygiene product from people's possession, placed it back inside the bathroom, and wrote-up the man. When I asked why these little things mattered so much to many captives and why staff worried about them, Mr. Castro told me that "little things mean a lot when everything is taken away from you."

### **Smelling Materiality, Creating Community**

Materials constantly move within prison units and across the DEF compound. COs push food carts over concrete paths and into people's living spaces. Medical workers take equipment and prescription drugs into prison units and dispense them amongst the population. Education workers bring writing utensils and paper while the librarian provides books to those who request the service. Individuals at lower security levels pick-up their canteen orders of foods, clothing, and hygiene products while those at the highest levels receive purchased materials from COs. Correctional officers dole out toilet paper, razors, soaps, and paper towels to people who request these items.<sup>liii</sup> Many captives pass kites from their cells by attaching string to a paper clip and sliding the note underneath the small opening between the concrete floor and their cell door. Some pass items through the holes they drilled in their windows. And many people share and trade food items, hygiene products, and narcotics when they pass in the unit or on the compound.

Material movement is everywhere at the DEF, even though a large number of people remain in their cells for upwards of 20 hours every day, and are heavily policed when they do move around the facility.

The State corrections department provides all basic hygiene products to their captives, but incarcerated men and women can also purchase these objects through canteen. State corrections workers purchase hygiene products from private companies such as Keefe, Charm-Tex or Bob Barker Detention Supplies, organizations that makes millions based on holding people in cages. All hygiene items are made cheaply and with the expectation that prisons will purchase them to be used by incarcerated people. These materials are produced quickly with little concern for the people that will use the products. Most soaps are unscented and leave behind a film that makes people feel dirtier than before usage. Shampoos are made with some scent but created with chemical additives that can leave users' hair a bit greasy. Unscented deodorant – with names like Maximum Security Deodorant – is made to provide little help in the southwestern climate, and toothpaste lacks a smell but tastes chalky and grainy. Most do not like these items and only use them if they lack funds to purchase materials from canteen or if nothing else is available. Those with funds can purchase bar soaps like Ivory, Dial; Ambi Cocoa Butter, and V05, Pert, and Garnier Fructis shampoos; Luster's, African Pride Oil, and Blue Magic Conditioner. They can also buy Speed Stick, Degree, and Dove deodorants and Crest, Aquafresh, Colgate, and Aim toothpaste. These items are not the only ones available to order, but I wanted to list some of the easiest materials to purchase through catalogues that work with corrections departments.

The most popular hygiene items at the DEF are the ones that have the fruitiest and strongest smells. Captives often purchase shampoos with citrus or berry smells and soaps with

minty and vanilla scents. Many people also commented as to how they used to think citrus and fruity smells were feminine, but now they wanted them because they “missed the smell of a woman” and because the prison “stinks without something to mask up the smell.” Some people preferred unscented shampoos and soaps, but these items still produce smells because their ingredients include both organic and chemical matter (such as sugar, vegetable glycerine, salt, and oils). The preferred deodorants in stick-form come scented in ways that many noted as manly. These smells included wood scents and clean odors, meaning lightly fragrant with aromas likened to air and water. Toothpaste was more complicated because they wanted specific smells to match tastes. The most popular scent-tastes were mint, spearmint, and cinnamon. There were a few people who hated the scented hygiene products almost as much as they despised the smells of the prison. These few were very sensitive to what they called “fake smells” and worried that the scents added to their feelings of confinement. One person mentioned that when he was locked up in SEG and with nowhere to go, he became hyper-sensitive to the smells of the hygiene products. It would often make him sick to his stomach and feel slightly dizzy. But most people wanted the scented products and often asked their loved ones to put money into their canteen accounts for these particular items.

Provided, shared, and traded materials have multiple meanings to most people, with many noting the diverse opinions and practices of individuals living on the penal compound. Many captives traded hygiene materials to build relationships with individuals whom they felt could protect them from other incarcerated people. In these cases, the person who provided the items for trade would expect that their given items would bind them to become involved when others harassed the giver. Some traded items with individuals with whom they wanted to have sexual relations. Others traded items because they could not afford to purchase everything they

wanted and tried to gather up diverse products through haggling with an item many people desired. Some shared materials with people who did not have the means to purchase anything for themselves. And some participants shared or traded items to generate income and corner the market on trading, so that they could coerce people to do their bidding.

But the most popular reason people traded hygiene products was because smells moved throughout the unit and across the compound with these materials. Captives would share fruity smelling shampoos, sometimes washing their hair and bodies multiple times before passing the item along. Many would use soap that other people left in the shower or would wrap it in a paper towel and leave it next to a cell door. Some people would even use scented deodorant and then pass it along to the next person in their unit. Numerous participants advised that these small materials left lasting scents that they could smell throughout their day. When I asked, Mr. Castro explained “When I use shampoo, I can smell it on me for hours. It fades, but it fades slowly. Sometimes it’ll last all day and I’ll go to bed that night smelling it.” Mr. Ruiz advised that the soap didn’t last as long as shampoo, but that he would sometimes hold his hands to his nose and inhale deeply to detect the fresh smell. Deodorants were different. Many people told me that sharing deodorant sticks was “nasty” or “dirty,” but still, about 13 captives shared three sticks with each other, claiming that they all liked the smell of the item. Toothpaste offered both smells and tastes, with some men advising that they tried not to eat anything for hours after they brushed their teeth with purchased toothpaste, because it made them feel clean and the smell would stay “on their breath.” And I observed all of these actions throughout my fieldwork tenure. Dozens of people would share hygiene products, using them a few times before passing them along to someone nearby, or leaving an item in a place where a person from another tier or pod could take it. Materials that came packaged in bottles with lids or caps were the most

portable and easiest to smell. Captives would pick up the bottle, open the lid or cap, and inhale deeply before they put the item in their pants or carried it away to the shower or their cell. The soap presented a problem because of its shape and refusal to stay completely solid in the warm climate. These items were rarely left in rec cages or anywhere outside because when they softened, they would need to be pieced together. Through these actions, people at the DEF incorporated everyday materials into olfactory processes.

These material smells also travelled with people throughout the facility. Most of the captives who shared hygiene items advised that they could smell their particular hygiene products with other people and things. Ms. Tona, an Indigenous woman incarcerated for over eight years explains:

I love walking to rec and catching a smell of my shampoo. It usually happens when there's wind, but that can be almost any day because it gets windy here a lot...When I smell it, I feel a little free. Like, I know I'm still in prison, but for a moment I feel like I'm not locked up...It makes the day go by faster and it's easier to do my time when this happens.

When I openly wondered if she was just smelling her own body odor, she told me that she doesn't actively smell herself and that it only happens for a "split second." But after this olfactory moment, she appeared more jovial and would often crack a joke about prison life; for example, she would state that "prison doesn't give me much, but it forces me to enjoy the little things. And I've seen my share of little things!" Mr. Ruiz advised that when he stands at his cell door, he can sometimes smell his soaps and deodorants on people passing by his cell. When he knows someone is coming from the shower or when he knows someone is using the materials he has passed to others, he even tries to quietly inhale as they move past his door. He doesn't always smell what he's seeking, but sometimes he does. In these moments, he says that the day gets a little better and he finds it easier to write letters home. He also explained that smelling

these moments sometimes slowed his heartbeat which helped with unsettling mobilities such as pulsing walls or rocking floors. It didn't always still the unsettling mobilities, but it helped.

Smelling these materials also demonstrated relationality between captives on the compound. When standing in or by Mr. Ruiz's cell or walking with Ms. Tona, I often tried to inhale when someone walked by, and sometimes I smelled the scent of shampoo, soap, or deodorant, but never toothpaste. When I told Ms. Tona that I briefly smelled what she did, she became excited and told me that I was lucky to not have to only smell prison all day and that I must be close with a lot of convicts. I pushed back and stated that COs must also smell hygiene materials sometimes, and her forehead wrinkled, eyebrows furrowed:

When they smell it, they're only smelling shampoo or soap or something. When we smell it, we smell everything. It's a mixture, and we're a part of it. COs don't smell us. They only smell the stuff on us. When someone who knows me smells me, they smell every part of me, even my shampoo. And sometimes they're smelling a whole bunch of us... Maybe you're not that close with convicts.

Mr. Ruiz would give me a fist bump when I smelled hygiene products on people and smile broadly. But he also informed me that I spoke about these moments as if I only smelled things and not people. When I advised that I couldn't tell the difference, he told me "that's how I know you've never been locked up." Mr. Avila, a Chicano man incarcerated for six years, also explained that when he smells the fruity or clean scents, he knows someone important to him is moving nearby, stating: "I never fully trust anyone in this place, but when that happens, I know it's someone I can talk to or hang with."

These statements offer insights into many people's perspectives about smell and how it links with relationality on the compound. For Ms. Tona, to smell means to understand the scent of everything that makes up a person. It contextualizes people that state administrators often try to simplify and turn into abstractions. Smelling the scents of shampoo and the people that she has

participated in sharing and passing items with provides Ms. Tona with a sense of community made up of people who know her and understand her. Mr. Avila's statements confirm this feeling. For a brief moment, these scents offer the knowledge that they are not alone and are part of a web of people and things that circulate in everyday lives. But they also link smelling someone to knowing them, participating in centuries old ideas that the scent of a person implies something innate about a person's character. This can also be explained by the fact that many captives share these materials with people whom they feel comfortable around, even if they don't always know who the person they share items with is passing it to next. In effect, though Mr. Avila (and most other people) openly state they don't trust anyone in prison, they exhibit a bit of faith that the people they share these items with will pass them on to someone whom they might not know, but will, in some fashion, be like them. And when Ms. Tona says that COs only smell the "stuff on us," she implies that they don't acknowledge incarcerated people for who they are, or that they even exist. Mr. Ruiz took me to task when he told me that I speak about the smells of things and not the people that come with them. And when people who know them, smell them, they also smell their community of hygiene product sharers. A community of captives. To smell, then, is to know a person, acknowledge their existence, and recognize their community.

Scents also didn't disappear when hygiene materials emptied, and many people continued to leave depleted bottles and containers around the compound. At any given moment, there were multiple empty plastic shampoo bottles, toothpaste tubes, and deodorant sticks in prison units. Most of these items were left around the tiers, sometimes by the shower or cell doors. While there were numerous empty containers found around the facility, I never saw more than two in any unit pod at one time. Some also kept empty hygiene containers in their cells and would occasionally hold them throughout the day. Some of these men and women would open the



containers and inhale deeply even though the containers had long been emptied and sometimes washed out with water. And a few people even passed the empty containers to each other. Many people would reuse these containers to produce their own hygiene materials, often mixing a few products into the container, and some utilized them for mixing materials for artistic creations, even finding ways to cut the plastic into little pieces and threading them together to make hanging art. Though they were often thrown away during shakedowns or standard cleaning routines, many people continued to collect these empty containers despite the risk of write-ups.

For many DEF captives, hygiene products become synesthetic objects through their everyday usage. Synesthesia, or processes through which different sensory practices enmesh to produce often involuntary and automatic sensations, occurs, for example, when sound produces color, tastes create memories, and sight generates smells (Houston and Taube 2000; Goldstein 1999; Marks 1984; Seremetakis 1994). And this is nothing new. Archaeologist Jo Day has demonstrated that the shape of Egyptian lotiform chalices (1550-1292 BCE) may have created intersensorial feelings in people who viewed or touched them – even producing distinctions between life and death – and that Minoan blossom bowls and Kamares (1900-1700 BCE) very likely generated specific smells for people who came across these objects because of everyday usage and ritual expectations (Day 2014). But because bodily sensations and synesthesia are always cultural constructions, sensory practices can vary widely for groups of peoples, both internally and externally. At the DEF, empty hygiene containers provide many people with the ability to continue to smell the community they created even when the contents have depleted. Ms. Tona would often pause by an empty shampoo bottle for a few moments before moving on. She never picked it up, but she often commented that she loved seeing little things that staff thought was trash and that she still smelled “her convicts” when she saw these small objects. Mr.

Johnson often complained that he wasn't allowed to keep his empty containers and wondered if COs took his items away because officers knew they "made me feel better." And multiple captives in three different units continued to pass empty containers to each other. When I asked if they could still smell what used to be in the bottles, one man offered that he knew his toothpaste was gone, but he still could "*feel* the stuff" around him. When asked, Mr. Daley advised that "I know it's empty, but I feel better when I see them [hygiene materials]. I swear sometimes I can smell them."

Because the smells are parts of themselves and their fellow captives, not just the aroma of shampoos, deodorants, and toothpastes, these small objects become the means by which these men and women form a collective in a space where they are expected to be isolated 'inmates.' When they smell each other through hygiene products, they identify someone they know and possibly like them: someone, not something, who exists. When they share shampoo, pass an empty deodorant container, or serendipitously inhale a member of their group, they smell themselves in each other, simultaneously constructing the individual as well as the group. While aspects of social death have been well-documented in prison settings, these people demonstrate that they are more than bare life. In fact, with minimal materials, they create communities, and versions of life itself.

Dozens of men and women participated in hygiene-product sharing across the compound. Over the course of approximately 10 weeks, I followed tubes of toothpaste, sticks of deodorants, soaps, and shampoos from a pod in the 5As to a pod in the 2Fs. This distance – a spatial distance that travelled through nine mechanized doors, four mechanized gates, five locked fences, and 700 feet. The materials moved by passing through hands, on food and laundry carts, were left at specific spots on the facility for someone to pick up, and through correctional workers (CO and

non-CO alike) picking up items from one person and leaving them with another. Hygiene materials moved every day, and I often lost track of specific items, only to have them reappear outside a cell door or in another unit a few days later. When more captives knew that I was following materials, many would inform me of who they passed items to or where they thought the objects were going. It became clear that materials moved around the facility at a fast pace, a speed faster than many incarcerated people were allowed to move themselves. And with these material movements, smells went along for the ride – crossing racial, gender, sexual, and in most cases, conviction boundaries.

But those who were labelled sex offenders and addicts were excluded from this sharing community. Out of the 41 people I observed participating in these actions, only two were convicted of child sex crimes (though no one knew this) and not one person was outwardly addicted to narcotics, though many used. When I asked about why these particular groups of people were often not involved in larger sharing groups, many informed me that they only shared with people “like them.” No one wanted to share with a “sex offender” partly because they despised what they had done, and partly because any linkage to a Chester would mean social ostracism and an exclusion from their sharing groups. And a sex offender was *something* anathema to who non-sex offenders were. They were innately different and those who had raped children were considered to have some inherent flaw in them, either by birth or victimization as a child. Addicts were thought to be completely unstable, people who could fuck up at any moment, causing COs to further restrict movement and access to materials. Whereas Chesters were often inherently flawed, addicts were weak, and therefore not to be included in anything of importance. But both these groups of people shared amongst themselves. Addicts shared drugs, hygiene products, and foods, but I was never able to get a clear understanding of how many

people this included or how far these materials travelled. Individuals convicted of child sex crimes shared stories of their past sexual actions, food, hygiene products, and reading materials. Most of these items stayed within specific units because prison administrators housed many people convicted of child sex crimes in the same units with the stated reason that it was for their own protection. This housing policy made it almost impossible for these individuals to break into larger sharing groups, though most don't want to participate in any sociality with sex offenders and addicts anyway. It turns out that incarcerated people, individuals socially ostracized and living with restricted access to everyday materials, partner with prison administrators to exclude specific Others and control their resources.

### **Smelling Movement and Feeling Alive**

Scent at the DEF does more than create relationships and communities, it also helps to construct the means for many men and women to feel movement even though they remain in their small cells. Over the course of my fieldwork tenure, multiple people told me that they sometimes feel as if they are moving while they are locked down. At first, I assumed they were lying to me and trying to see what they could get me to believe. I imagined them laughing with others about how they got me to believe in nonsense, and joking about how they were already making up new stories that I would write in my scratch notes. After all, I was being told about moving walls, vibrating papers, and now people feeling movement while locked in their cells. Still, captives living in different units would often talk about how correctional staff may lock them in prison, but that this restriction can't fully control them. I attributed this to men who often joked about how masculine they were or how real men can never be dominated. A short time into this confusion, I noticed small bottles of shampoo, tubes of toothpaste, deodorant sticks, and soaps passing between the individuals making these claims. While I can never be certain that

these same materials that I noticed on this day started in one unit and ended up in another, the practice of hygiene product sharing linked all of these individuals.

The hygiene materials become part of DEF captives when they use them, and many men and women merge their scent with the items. Mr. Daley often spoke about how he wondered if he was smelling fruity because of the shampoo, or if the combination of his smell and the hair product's scent created the aroma, but he knew he felt less confined when he came across this scent. Mr. Canto, a 53-year-old Caucasian incarcerated person of 12 years, explained that the soaps he uses creates a distinct smell because "everyone has their own smell" and because "things smell different to different people." Ms. Tona advised that even if people knew something smelled fruity or musky or minty, it didn't mean that the aroma could be described in the same terms by everyone, because "just like everyone looks different, they smell different." She added that certain smells also feel good because "they move around. They can't be locked down all the time." From this perspective, smells are created by the interactions and enmeshing of people and their materials. But it's not that people are their materials, and vice versa, because there is still a slight distinction. These particular smells are produced by the relationships between people and things and the feelings they generate.

Olfactory constructions at the DEF produce many feelings depending on the person you ask. Because some perceived of materials as things to be owned, a number of people advised that specific things and smells belonged to certain people, creating feelings of ownership of these same materials, scents, and people. There were a few physical and verbal fights about who was allowed to take and use the soaps left in showers, which captives were allowed to share in the materials, who held onto the items too long, and when something was to be discarded. Most of these fights lasted about as long as one punch or a nasty comment, but the point was always

clear. The items had owners, even if they were collective owners. Some felt that certain smells made them feel more masculine or feminine and even sexually attractive to others. Fruity smells could be polarizing, with some asserting that they were womanly scents and others advising that they were masculine because a distinct aroma would be created if the user also smelled like a man. But scents associated with air and water, such as items marked with cotton or linen smells and items containing menthol, were almost exclusively noted as smells that would attract women. A few people also told me that men wanted to sleep with them when they smelled of cinnamon or mint and that it made them feel more feminine when they produced these aromas.

But for many people these olfactory productions generated feelings of movement because of how they understand smell and bodies. As described in the previous section, many people recognize smelling as a process by which little pieces of people and things float through the air until they are inhaled by another person. Once inhaled, these pieces become a part of the inhaler and can move with people around the facility. This fusion does not obliterate the Self/Other distinction, but rather, links the two (or many) together. For these people, their scents may be inhaled, but they are not completely absorbed by any other person or thing. Instead, these pieces of themselves hitch a ride with the other person smelling them. When I asked about smell, Mr. Daley advised that, “It’s nice to know that some part of me is still out there” and then when he perceived that I didn’t quite understand, he added that “there are parts of me that never really disappear.” Ms. Tona explained that growing up with fundamentalist Christian parents and with “a little bit” of Indigenous knowledge allowed her to fully appreciate that, while she knows there is a difference between herself and other people around her, she also recognizes that people are always made up of the parts of each other. “That makes it all the more important to make sure you don’t hang around the wrong people. Sooner or later, you begin to stink like them,” she

offered. And Mr. Ruiz, never one to waste a word, told me that he loves that COs “can’t really lock me down because I can’t be completely controlled.” These enculturated understandings of smell and body ‘parts’ are the means by which many people upend their confinement and punishing restrictions. These olfactory assumptions have a long history in the united states, but so does the notion that bodies are made of parts – usually indicated as a result of capitalist expectations of industrialization and naturalized masculinity (Martin 1987). But for those who participate in the sharing of hygiene materials, bodies made up of parts provides the avenue for how they feel movement inside their cells. Understanding smell and mobility to be inherently linked and their bodies to be made up of movable parts, these men and women share small pieces of themselves through scent. While one person may be inside their cell, another may be moving to a rec cage or towards Education or Chow Hall. Because pieces of the captive move with hygiene materials and then become a part of certain people around them, they can literally travel the compound while inside their cells.

But it’s not enough to know that parts of themselves are moving around the facility, these men and women need to smell the aromas of particular hygiene materials in order to generate feelings of movement. Most of the people I observed didn’t feel a constant sense of their own movement, instead they often contended with moving walls, vibrating paper, and rocking floors as their animacy hierarchies disrupted. These feelings diminished when they smelled shared scents moving past them or circulating through air flow. I observed eight people feeling moments of moving walls and gasping air into their noses and throats, slowly breathe easier and stop shaking when they smelled the shared shampoos and soaps.<sup>liii</sup> This usually occurred when someone was passing by their cells or if they had some of these hygiene products on hand. There were also times when a person told me that they smelled the needed scents through air

moving in the unit. Ms. Tona advised that shared soap helped the most because she could leave it in her cell for a few days and its aromas would make her feel less confined and “like I’m walking around.” But these moments dissipated when she passed along the materials, coming back to her only on serendipitous occasions.<sup>liv</sup> Mr. Ruiz also advised that he doesn’t smell these scents every day, but when he does, the prison walls “can’t contain me.” And such feelings were reported by all but two of the 17 people sharing these particular materials.<sup>lv</sup> Most of these men and women knew that letting go of and sharing these materials with others “like them” prevented them from utilizing their scents on a daily basis, but without sharing these items, they could not generate moments of movement.

It is important to emphasize that these people speak about feeling movement in very literal terms. It would be a mistake to think that they imagine movement or that it is an abstract concept that only symbolizes power and relationality. Instead, the men and women who share materials and these specific olfactory constructions, *actually* move throughout the compound. Parts of their bodies may be locked in cages and cells, but other parts flow through the air, move with their fellow captives’ bodies, and live with their scented hygiene materials as they are passed from one person to the next. No person spoke of feeling fractured by this practice, but rather, understood these movements as processes of spreading outward instead of collapsing inward. Mr. Thomas, whom we met back in chapter two, advised that he knows people won’t believe him, but that “I’m stuck in this facility, but I’m not always stuck in my cell. COs don’t know how often I move around here because they just see me in this cell. But they don’t see all of me.” He does acknowledge that this movement doesn’t always stop unsettling mobilities, but it helps. These DEF materialist practices combined with assumptions about bodily constructions, allow many men and women to hide from their captors in plain sight as they move across the



facility. Sight may be linked with enlightenment rationality, but smell produces novel power dynamics that can never be fully understood or controlled by those not living as captives.

Because many people tightly link animacy and physical movement, they also gain a sense of aliveness that they feel is often denied them. With their body parts moving with other people and materials, they feel mobile at random days and times. When they move, even though they are locked down in cells, they feel as alive, if not more so, than the ‘inanimate’ materials moving around them. They lay claim to their aliveness through the relationships they cultivate, scents they produce, and pieces of their bodies swirling around them. Walls slow, floors steady, and paper calms. While some COs attempt to turn people’s cells into coffins for dead or dying things, and weaponize de-animating language, many captives create living spaces through the linkage of smell and mobility.

For these individuals, while mobility and animacy were tightly linked, the relationship remained dynamic. Throughout the sharing group, many reported that they not only felt movement but also that they understood themselves as more alive than they had felt since living inside the prison. They demonstrated feeling moving walls and rocking floors less than before they began sharing scented materials, though vibrating paper did not dissipate as much. But still, they often considered themselves as or more alive than the materials that confined them, but were not completely free of unsettling mobilities. The sharing gave them a sense of aliveness, but not enough to permanently resituate themselves at the top of their animacy hierarchies. Instead, they live with wobbling animacies where some days they would exist at the apex, and others they would move up and down the animacy ladder depending on if they felt movement or not.

While their sense of aliveness disrupts correctional policies that many captives feel push them down animacy hierarchies, this often occurs at the expense of those considered sex offenders and addicts. The latter were purposefully excluded from larger sharing groups precisely because many believed that those particular characters produced undesirable odors or that they threatened the entire sharing process. While those considered sex offenders and addicts often form their own groups, they were smaller and usually contained to one unit. This scale prevented them from feeling as much movement as the larger sharing groups, and many of these undesirable people felt more confined with the knowledge that others purposefully excluded them. And because mobility and animacy are tightly linked, sex offenders and addicts became situated beneath members of the larger sharing group in animacy hierarchies. In effect, Ms. Tona, Mr. Ruiz, Mr. Daley, and the rest of their cohort restricted the movement of those they believed were inherently flawed or could not be trusted, treated them as threat, and made them feel less alive.

### **Concluding Distinctions**

In this chapter, I demonstrated that olfactory sensory practices at the DEF turn living beings into dead-like things, disrupt Self/Other distinctions, generate movement that constructs animacy hierarchies, and distinguishes social groups. Smell, more than just a biological process, troubles many correctional officers and incarcerated people's naturalized assumptions about each other and their created worlds. But COs and captives do not live outside of State-sanctioned, torturous power dynamics. While officers work in oppressive environments that dehumanizes and disappears thousands of people before returning to a place they call home, captives cannot leave nor are they allowed to construct relationships and meaning in the same ways they did before their penal kidnapping. But through the linkage of smell and mobility, these men and

women form new relationships and feel movement in a place where these actions are deemed dangerous and unexpected.

A key difference between CO and captive olfactory constructions is that while both groups utilize smell in generative manners, COs do so to mostly maintain their notion that ‘inmates’ are closer to dead-like things while captives attempt to lay claim to a sense of aliveness that they rightfully worry they have been denied. Correctional officers’ main concern is that they are too similar to those they oversee. Smell emphasizes this fear because many COs believe that to smell is to take parts of something inside and absorb the thing into oneself. This construct upends many officer’s Self/Other distinctions, turning an already “too close” relationship into permanent threat. After all, if smelling dissolves borders and transgresses identities, it must be perpetually controlled. So, COs turn, again, to restricting movement in attempts to deodorize the contaminant, and create olfactory taphonomic processes to re-odorize their worlds. But smells cannot be permanently controlled, nor can they be fully disappeared, leading many COs to further restrict access to material and social relations. These actions only exacerbate their concerns, which creates more threat and a further blurring of the CO/Captive distinction. While there are always daily practices that change these olfactory processes, CO actions, prison policies, and the architectural design creates the smelly threat that challenges officer’s sense of themselves. For their part, incarcerated people understand that they live in places meant to disappear and kill. The men and women in this chapter use smell to generate community and movement throughout the compound, frustrating CO attempts to turn them into dead-like things and (re)situating themselves and others within constructed animacy hierarchies. These practices create novel methods for feeling movement that upend many captive’s confinement and

demonstrate that power is exercised from all directions, even in a prison setting. Still, captives' constructs do not provide solace or comfort for everyone.

Just as COs attempt to create distinctions between themselves and their captives, many incarcerated men and women actively restrict those labelled sex offenders and addicts from sharing groups. Individuals living as sex offenders or addicts, already displaced and contending with their own loss of communities, are purposefully excluded from creating similar forms of relationality that other captives generate. This foreclosure serves to undermine targeted peoples' personal sense of aliveness while buttressing animacy for those dominating others. By doing so, non-sex offenders or those not struggling with addiction to narcotics effectively limit the movement of the undesirable Others. In this case, these individuals demonstrate an olfactory similarity with correctional officers. While Ms. Tona, Mr. Ruiz, and the rest of their sharing group believe that pieces of their bodies travel with those "like them," they also worry that they can take in and absorb parts of those they consider Other. This fear provides them with the rationale for excluding Chesters and addicts from sharing hygiene materials and for restricting their movement. Because mobility and animacy tightly link at the DEF, captives participate in similar killing practices in which COs also partake. Restricted movement becomes many people's key method to control, identify, distinguish, and terminate. Once again, mobility provides the tools for both CO and captive to dominate as well as liberate.

Both correctional officers and incarcerated people seek to create worlds where their animacy hierarchies align with their movement assumptions. In their ideal reality, dead-like things do, or should, not move but living beings do. COs attempt to control the smells of their captives because they situate incarcerated people closer to death and become unsettled when this construction is troubled. Smells, like captives, continue to move, and hierarchies need to be

rebuilt. As this proves impossible, many COs feel constantly threatened and act aggressively towards captives, their families, and themselves. For many incarcerated people, being alive means generating feelings of movement though they remain in their small cells. In order to prove they exist, many of these same individuals create community as means to demonstrate that they are not abstract things, but rather, complex beings who rely upon and are semi-responsible for people like them. By coupling smell with mobility, COs and captives work to maintain or create ideal hierarchies and feelings that they imagine can be, or rather, should be possible.

While I have written about the DEF as a place of restricted movement, in actuality, materials and people constantly move across the compound. Hygiene products travel between fences and hands, smell flows through the air, and many men and women move across the facility though they remain in their cells. With this assertion, I do not mean to undermine the devastating policies and actions that constrain captives and rigidly control access to material and social relations, but I do mean to complicate everyday prison life. The next chapter makes things even more messy because the captives with whom I came to respect participate in violent practices that cause so much pain to others while simultaneously providing them with something they feel has been stripped away: their access to Human. And many COs, whom I often disliked, assist captives on their quest to become Human by providing the needed materials, relationships, and even movement.

## **Chapter 6:** **Becoming Human**

Mr. Roberts didn't know what to do. He had come to this prison three months ago with an eight-year sentence for having sex with his 11-year-old neighbor. He had always heard stories about what inmates did to men like him, men who loved differently. He worried that they would attack and kill him once they found out who he was. But classification officers assured that no one would find out about his crimes unless he told them. Comforted by this information, Mr. Roberts sat in his cell on the first day waiting to complete his mandatory weeklong lockdown when Mr. Thomas came to his small window to introduce himself. He told Mr. Roberts that he had been incarcerated for a few decades and that he could help him learn how to live in prison if he needed help. He breathed a sigh of relief when Mr. Thomas provided this offer, and that night he dreamed of the girl he missed so much. But two days later, Mr. Thomas returned and asked for his classification papers, telling him it was required information if one wanted to live in this unit. Panicked, he told Mr. Thomas that he did not have his paperwork yet. It wasn't a convincing lie because the man in front of him narrowed his eyes and told him to get him the papers quickly.

Finally released from his orientation lockdown the following week, Mr. Roberts walked to the yard with his tier-mates. Within minutes, Mr. Thomas shoved him into the concrete and demanded his papers. Mr. Roberts told him that he had them in his cell but that he needed to find them in his personal folder. Mr. Thomas kicked him in the face for that response. The next day, Mr. Arroyo pushed him down the unit stairs and stomped on his hand. Three days later, Mr. Watkins entered his cell and beat him until his face throbbed and his ribs bruised. He cried for mercy, but no one came to his assistance. Instead, COs mocked his appearance as he explained that he had tripped over his own feet. Not knowing what to do, he remained in his cell for a

week, ignoring calls for tier and rec time, and refusing to turn over his personal paperwork. But he couldn't hold out forever. Desperate to shower and move around, he came out for tier time and went quickly to the small corner where he could shut a caged door and cleanse his body. On the way back to his cell, Mr. Thomas punched him so hard in his back that he lost his breath, worried it would never return. He gave up his papers after that. Now everyone in the unit knew who he was, but they wouldn't understand. He wondered why the COs didn't protect him. They had to know what was going on.

After living in the unit for one month, Mr. Roberts sobbed as he wrote a request for protective custody (PC). He didn't want to live in SEG, but he also didn't want to die. He rarely left his cell, but men would pause by his small window and whisper threats that they could kill him in his sleep or rape him in the yard for all to see. He didn't think these threats could be realized, but he wasn't sure they couldn't happen either. He missed his old life and thought of his young neighbor. He became enraged that she told her mother about their love, and wished these men would leave him alone. Some of his unit mates were incarcerated for raping adult women and some for murder. But still, they targeted him. For months he held out hope that he would be moved to SEG. Until then, he would remain in his cell as much as possible and find a way to survive this place. But at night, when everyone else seemed to be asleep, he would feel the walls closing in on him. His breath would feel constricted, materials vibrated around him, and he no longer dreamed of his taboo love. That's when he started cutting himself.

### **Identifying Non-Human, and Creating Human**

Mr. Thomas was trying to get me to understand. We were sitting in his prison unit watching Jeopardy with five other people as COs stared down at us from their security center. I knew my presence brought added correctional scrutiny, so I planned to leave once the show

ended. Mr. Thomas told me not to worry about the COs, but I couldn't stop looking up at the plastic windows above us. I also knew someone was missing. Mr. Roberts remained in his cell. When I asked about his absence, three captives smiled broadly as they ate their soup and told me not to worry about "that fucking Chester." I was shocked to learn that Mr. Roberts committed sex offenses and told them that I understood why they didn't want him around. Mr. Arroyo, a 23-year-old Chicano man incarcerated for three years, and Mr. Watkins, a 28-year-old African-American man incarcerated for approximately 15 months, took a break from Jeopardy to inform me that Chesters should all be killed and that it was their "responsibility to take these kid fuckers out." When I protested and told them that I don't think they should be physically harmed, they mocked me for demonstrating sympathy for things that didn't deserve it. Mr. Thomas patiently waited as they educated me on the actions that could be taken once a Chester has been identified. All three of these men threatened Mr. Roberts, telling him he should PC (voluntarily go to SEG for Protective Custody) or risk a physical altercation. One of these men beat Mr. Roberts so badly that he required medical attention. No one person took credit for this beating with Mr. Watkins telling me that everyone assumed it was a group assault. They also restrict movement and escalate violence until permanent disability occurs. This violence usually happens when one person enters an unsuspecting Chester's cell and beats them with fists and material objects. Mr. Thomas laughed as he told me that usually "Chesters become so scared that they won't leave their cell even for tier or yard time." Eventually, they have Chesters permanently removed either through segregation or death.

All of these men joined in with past examples of this process, advising that there is no set protocol for their actions. Mr. Arroyo offered that they skipped threats and went straight to beating Mr. Roberts because they wanted him to "get the message." As the men spoke, they



continuously smiled and told me that I shouldn't worry about Chesters because they did something unforgivable, something that broke a "Human law." Seeing my confusion, Mr. Thomas explained that there are two types of crimes. The first is like breaking a legal code such as assaulting women or dealing drugs and the second was breaking a Human law such as raping a child. When I still displayed more confusion, Mr. Watkins interjected that Chesters' actions demonstrate that they don't know what it is to be Human because a "real human would never do what they do." Humans are incapable of raping a child and Chesters' actions show that they have never, in fact, been Human. For final clarification, I asked how they knew Mr. Roberts was a Chester. "We checked his papers," replied Mr. Thomas.

In this chapter, I concentrate on how some incarcerated people construct Human by violently restricting physical movements of those they consider less than or non-human. Men and women perform these actions through physical attacks and intimidations; utilizing papered narratives of precision to create abstract crimes; and controlling access to material and social relations. Many target sex offenders for restricted movement precisely because they perceive them as non-human, but they have different reasons for why these individuals sit hierarchically beneath them, such as naturalized gender and sexuality assumptions. These actions, and the scales of Human they create, link physical movement with the construction of Human that have unintended consequences for everyone on the compound. Furthermore, because physical movement often signifies aliveness, I demonstrate that mobility remains a central concern for people who target Others for incarceration and extermination.

But some people do not only restrict the physical movement of their fellow captives to produce Human. Instead, many individuals write letters, create poetry, produce artwork, and share everyday materials to perform Human. Through these actions, they construct an individual

sense of Human and immobilize temporality to place themselves and Others hierarchically within animacy and Human categories. To be Human is to dominate mobility, materials, and relationships. These men and women demonstrate that to be Human at the DEF is inextricably linked with the power to control, but also that not everyone agrees as to how hierarchy should be constructed. Throughout this chapter, I also argue that how people create the Human category, often fraught with conflicts and negotiations, produces many of the justifications used by prison administrators to continue the level system that serves to control movement across the facility. This reality places captives in a difficult position; to be Human is to exert control as a means of liberation, resilience, and mobility, but their controlling actions often lead to restrictive measures that can make them feel as if they have little say over their bodies, materials, and movements.

At the DEF, captives use the word ‘human’ in multiple ways that create a slippery category. I capitalize Human when referring to a specific incarcerated being that is constructed through mobility, violence, and materiality. For example, many people demonstrate concern about who and what is allowed to be or become Human, and rely upon gendered and atomistic assumptions in producing this particular creation. Their worries provide insight into a key cultural category that informs everyday relations and actions across the compound. But they also refer to humans in a very general sense, and to prevent as much confusion as possible, I do not capitalize the word human to try to represent the difference. For example, I often heard people say things like “there are too many human beings in the world” and “humans are fucking up the environment.” These statements do not exemplify a clear distinction about what Human means to them, but rather, demonstrate a broad understanding of similar beings that they lump together for convenience. For many DEF men and women, Human has a special status that human does not. In this chapter, I attempt to be very clear about these distinctions, but because there is some

overlap between captive's constructed categories, there may also be some small overlap in my analysis.

### **Checking Assumptions**

Whenever I tell people that I conducted research inside a prison, I brace myself for an onslaught of racist and colonial questions from individuals with faces begging for salacious stories about incarcerated people's violent natures. Their eyes widen, lips open, and they breathe with a slight excitement as I try not to mouth the words "go fuck yourself." And this happens at most locations, including universities, churches, grocery stores, and conferences. At this point, I often lie about my research and just let people assume that anthropology means I dig up dinosaur bones or only conduct surveys. Fine by me. But in this final chapter, I find myself in a bit of a pickle because I have to discuss how some people utilize violence, sometimes grotesque violence, to become Human. While it is not the only means of Human-making, it is often one of the foundations. I will attempt to demonstrate that this violence is contextually situated and not an inherent character flaw, but this means that I run the risk of reifying naturalized assumptions about incarcerated people. If I fail to convince readers that violence is nuanced and not at all inevitable, that's on me. But even though many probably know what dehumanization feels like in your daily lives as a result of a multiplicity of positionalities, I ask that readers try to imagine what it feels like to be treated in non-human ways as a captive in the supposed land of the free.

This chapter is split into two separate sections about Human-making in order to demonstrate incarcerated people's complex processes of becoming Human. I begin with how they utilize violence to analyze what this means at the DEF, while also showing that their actions are based in larger social structures, such as gender and sexuality, that go far beyond prison borders. The men and women in this section provide important insights into the dangers that

Human-making can create, but also assist in understanding how people creatively find ways to the Human in places designed to dehumanize and destroy. The danger in this chapter is that readers will assume that incarcerated people exist as criminals who seek to perform violence because of some innate character flaw, or as a result of growing up in “cultures of poverty” (see Lewis 1975 and the Moynihan Report 1965). The former argument seeks to legitimize state violence toward peoples who cannot regulate their personal behavior, while the latter scholarship utilizes racist and sexist assumptions that asserts the need for governmental interventions into kinship formations coded in liberal language as social welfare programming. These ideologies have long been disproven, but many people stubbornly hold to them as they justify mass incarceration. This chapter attempts to provide context for captives’ Human-making violence without providing fodder for any of the above ignorant assumptions. The chapter then provides two more ways that incarcerated people become Human: through the creating and sharing of artistic works, and writing personal narratives on non-bureaucratic paper. I also show how these participants share a direct link with other people held in bondage throughout many American histories as a result of mobility assumptions. When reading this chapter, it is important to remember that in the DEF context, dehumanization has unique features and to become Human is often something to be achieved and feared.

### **What is Human?**

The social construction of Human has often occurred within what Samantha Frost (2016: 3) has called a “fantasy of a mastery of self, earth, and creature” that is specific to a ‘western’ historical moment. This ‘moment’ began in seventeenth-century Europe with philosophers trying to understand how Human was distinct from non-human. Many scholars turned to bodily senses for explanatory models and to naturalize hierarchies. John Locke’s writings about the nature of

Human propelled an intellectual movement known as sensualism: the usage of bodily senses as analytical tools for the exploration of physical environments (Huang 2016). Philosophers began to argue that bodily senses contributed to the development of reason and civilization, implying that Human naturally embodied these so-called gifts (Reinarz 2014). But enlightenment sensory discourses also attempted to grapple with the accuracy of the senses. Some, like Thomas Hobbes, argued for a materialist perspective and insisted that Human bodies' sensory apparatuses needed to be fine-tuned before they could be trusted to perceive the 'real' world. Hobbes sought to undermine Aristotelian beliefs that bodily senses elucidated the essences of everything in the universe; instead, he demanded that truth could not be found in essences, but rather only in the tangible qualities of things. Within this framework, sensory hierarchies were created according to the applicability and tangible abilities of bodily senses as analytical tools. The senses were now to be utilized alongside notions of objectivity and progressive teleologies for knowledge production, and the placement of entire peoples within cultural hierarchies. Expanding upon enlightenment sensualism, German philosopher and anthropologist Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), utilizing and critiquing Hegelian dialectics, asserted that the senses were essential for thinking, but that a deep materialist perspective was needed to truly understand how Human existed on earthly and spiritual planes. For Feuerbach, Human was constituted through reason, will, and affection because Human had the ability to be both Subject and Object. In this framework, one becomes Human only in relation with and through Human itself and through everyday materials.

Karl Marx (1844) delved further into materialist economic and political systems theories asserting that previous philosophers had naturalized Human too much. Human was a natural creature, but was also a being that had unique sensuous capabilities specifically crafted through

material environments. For Marx, Human could only be fully understood by scientifically exploring sense-perception, an argument grounded in his belief that historicizing Human would prevent further alienation caused by capitalistic exploitation. For Marx, the enclosure processes of private property and the stealing of labor through economic enslavement decontextualized workers' lives and alienated them from their bodies, their power, and Human. In this perspective, to be Human meant the ability to transcend oppressive economies by allowing (heterosexual, white, and male) individuals to develop their bodies and skills within lived environments free from coerced labor and exploitation. The "emancipation of all human senses" (Marx 1844: 46) allowed workers to become Human because they became historical and material beings.

Many nineteenth and early twentieth-century anthropologists took up a social-evolutionist framework when studying culture and so-called 'primitive peoples.' Following a Darwinian (1859 [2003]) scientific approach and concepts created by Charles Montesquieu (1748), Edward Burnett Tyler (1871) argued that cultures, and implicitly the peoples making those cultures, were to be classified as savage, barbarian, and civilized, noting that looking at less civilized people demonstrated remnants of a linear past. Lewis Henry Morgan (1877) focused on heterosexual kinship patterns and his personal concerns about 'promiscuity' to develop stages of cultural development in an evolutionary timeline. Mobility was not centered in these works, but the authors suggested that primitive peoples were less rooted, and therefore, more mobile than civilized peoples, setting up a mobility framework where civilized individuals and societies managed movement through gendered and classed relations. Interestingly, when reading these works, it becomes clear that Human exists, but only within the civilized slot where white euro-american men, and sometimes women, of very specific social stations were placed. This scholarship was influenced by and buttressed the growing eugenics movements, often

linking crime, race, and Human hierarchies for the benefit of white europeans seeking to validate their bigoted, supremacist notions (Fabian 2010; Gossett 1997; Jackson and Depew 2017; Wade 2014). This violent relationship assisted in grounding racialized hierarchies of the Human within the protective embrace of scientific logic and rationalism. But still, Human remained a volatile category because individual and collective positionalities continuously stretched, challenged, and upended the category.

Anthropologists assisted in creating a version of Human throughout much of the early twentieth century by performing scientific studies through ethnographic fieldwork, archaeological excavations, linguistic framings, and biological experiments. In attempts to deessentialize Human, foundational scholarship established that: race exists as a social construct (Boas 1912); story-telling crafts Human knowledge, practices, and group formation (Hurston 1935 [1999]); kinship patterns differ across cultural contexts and that Human hierarchies should not be a basis for scientific endeavors (Boas 1888; Mauss 1985); economic systems often create complex Human relationships (Malinowski 1959 [1985]); sex and gender are not natural systems but actually culturally constructed power dynamics (Mead 1928 [2001], 1935 [2001]); and Humans learn their behaviors through enculturation (Benedict 1934 [2006]). With scientific progress increasingly linked to naturalized assumptions about who and what constituted Human, often ideas infused with hierarchical notions of the worlds around them, these anthropologists tried to demonstrate the complexity and creative processes endemic to being or becoming Human – some to greater success than others. But during the early twentieth century, much of euro-american science persisted in a fever dream about the importance of discovering the truth of Human and its natural order, as a means to manage peoples who posed threats to imagined white nations, borders, racial hygiene, and colonial projects. I would argue that these ideas persist

throughout contemporary times. The historical moment that produced the search for master of self, earth, and creature continues to dominate.

In this fantasy, excluding peoples from Human became a key component in managing the pillaging and plundering of colonization processes. Those who didn't quite meet the criteria to be placed in the domain of Human usually fell short, as a result of political, religious, economic, racial, gender, ableness, and sexual constructions that supposedly denoted entire groups' intellect and ability to reason (Baynton 2001, 2016; Chen 2012; Frost 2016; Irigaray 1985; Lloyd 1984; Luciano and Chen 2015). These individuals and collectives were marked as beings reliant upon the body, and sensory perception, as opposed to the power of the mind, or at least relying on the body and specific senses too much. They also moved in inappropriate ways, either through migration, rooting to improper places, or living with dangerous bodies whose movements could not be fully recognized or easily categorized. The less-than or non-Human was simultaneously excluded from full access to the category but necessary for Human to be realized. After all, for this fantasy to continue, there needed to be Human to control and manage all beings outside the category domain; for the betterment of the world, of course. The euro-american Human project became even more tightly linked to imperial violence and nation-building as the category relied upon peoples deemed non-human who could be exploited, disappeared, exterminated (Alcoff 2005; Brown 2004; Butler 2010, 2004, 1990 [2006]; Esposito 2012; Hirschmann 2013; Stoller 1995, 2010; Weheliye 2014).

The brilliance and horror of Human is that it left room for marginalized peoples to demand inclusion into the category, often leading to reevaluations and outright restructuring practices even as oppressive fantasies continued to dominate. Feminists (mostly white and middle-class women) demanded inclusion into Human by arguing for equity between women



and men (Anthony and Stanton 1848 [1998]; Betty Friedan 1963 [2001]; Wollstonecraft 2017 [1792]). But this movement often continued to exclude non-white and non-euro-american peoples leading Women of Color to challenge the imperial constructs of Human (Alexander and Mohanty 2010; Anzaldúa 1987 [2012]; Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Holland 2010; Hong 2011; Sandoval 2000; Spivak 1988; Truth 1851). Queer and disability movements also coalesced around Humanizing discourses with many utilizing narratives of inclusion to become part of the category and to seek legal protections and access to national resources, often relying upon normative arguments that reinforced social inequities (Davis 2006; Duggan 2002; Garland-Thomson 1997; Shuttleworth 2012; Puar 2007, 2017). But there were also radical organizers that linked the enslavement of African peoples, the genocide of Indigenous peoples, and capitalist exploitation of laboring classes to demonstrate how Human was never meant to expand beyond euro-american elites (Baldwin 1963 [1995]; Coates 2016, 2017; Cobb and Fowler 2007; Dunbar Ortiz 2014; Shakur 2001; Zinn 2008). For some marginalized peoples, Human supplied the hope of validation and the possibility of legitimacy, while for others, seeking access to the category proved futile because Human was the problem.

Currently, scholars have turned towards trying to blur the imaginary line that divides Human from all other living beings. Philosophers and researchers have long tried to understand what Human has that animals do not – reason, speech, emotion, shame, intellect – but many scientists are now demonstrating how Human cannot be divorced from other living organisms, including bacteria, insects, and viruses (Aiello 2010; Alaimo 2010; Callaway 2014; Grosz 2011; Haraway 2008; Kültz et al. 2013). These scientists now join social researchers and ethicists who made clear that the animal/Human divide was constructed with so much ambiguity and gate-keeping that violence towards and oppression of minoritized peoples was built into the concept

(Agamben 1998, 2003; Butler 2004; Esposito 2012; Hammonds and Herzig 2008). This theoretical thread has followed and influenced how agency has been reconfigured to include supposedly inanimate object and materials (that is, inanimate from many euro-american perspectives) (Bryant 2011; Connolly 2011; Coole 2013; Delanda 1997; Haraway 1991; Harman 2011; Latour 2007; Morton 2013; Povinelli 2015, 2016; Todd 2016). Human is also being deconstructed to disrupt colonial processes that categorize peoples within hierarchical schema that reinforce white supremacy and environmental degradation (Fausto-Sterling 2005; Fullwiley 2015; Inda 2014; Roberts 2011; Tallbear 2013). Human is also described as embodied creatures that are porous and permeable processes constantly absorbing and affecting the environment around them – a relationship that can change gene function and disease susceptibility (Guthman and Mansfield 2013; Landecker 2011; Landecker and Panofsky 2013; Lock 2013; Niewohner 2011; Slavich and Cole 2013; Tuana 2008). These scholars seek to undermine the historical moment that brought us the Human fantasy that certain beings are naturally superior to Others who must be managed and controlled.

Alongside this theoretical move, Tim Ingold's (2000, 2007, 2011) assertion that organisms, objects, and environments form relational meshworks that constitute each other and the living world have become central to what has been called the ontological turn. For Ingold, worlds are demonstrably alive because organisms create trails of movement and growth that interweave and create how life is lived. In this framework, movement is necessary for the Human to perceive, therefore, marking movement as a foundational aspect of how worldly inhabitants continuously enfold and enmesh. I am empathetic to Ingold's ideas, probably because I grew up with a Chiricahua Apache father who offered many of the same arguments. In fact, Zoe Todd (2016) demonstrates that many western scholars lay claim to theories that should be attributed to

Indigenous peoples. Interestingly, movement and Human has been strongly interlinked in anthropological studies across the world. For some Aboriginal peoples in Australia, Human is created through processes of spatial immobility that generate the Human form, even while continuous worldly movements produce aspects of life itself (Rose 1991). In this context, Human becomes immobilized in bodily capacity but remain alive beings. In a study of a group of Andamanese islanders, Vishvajit Pandya (1993) suggests that movement distinguishes Human, animals, and spirits and that smell and movement interlink to generate Human. For some Piro peoples, improper or too much movement signifies a lack of kinship ties and loneliness, which then allows some members of the group to question Human statuses (Gow 2000). And Elsie Maria Lagrou (2000) argued that some Cashinahua scales of movement create the alive Human, their relationships, and their spiritual forms after death has occurred. Ingold seeks a grand theory that can be utilized for understanding how the linkage of movement and Human interweaves across contexts. But anthropologists and other scholars have seemed open to demonstrating how mobility informs Human-making processes only in regards to peoples living outside of areas largely populated by euro-americans. This chapter seeks to challenge this oversight in order to understand how individuals living with harsh movement restrictions become mobile and alive, and therefore Human, to demonstrate how the “master” fantasy persists but is also undermined in places designed to discipline, destroy, and dehumanize. In the DEF context, many captives and correctional officers openly assert, in an Ingoldian fashion, that movement is essential to the construction of Human. By utilizing mobility as an analytical framework, I demonstrate that the reliance upon movement for world-making practices can provide solace for some individuals but also violently upend naturalized assumptions about what it means to feel alive and Human. Perceiving the world from particular forms of Indigenous or Ingoldian perspectives may seem

like a brilliant anthropological move, but it also can cause horrific pain when one is held in bondage. Movement doesn't always generate the alive Human. Movement can also destroy and kill the Human because how, where, and why it occurs enfolds with socio-political power dynamics that should not be ignored.

### **Sexuality, Gender, Chester**

I struggled to find empathy for those called SOs. Sex Offenders, whom I called child molesters, were monsters to me. I worry they still are. I often joined in on the jokes and hateful conversations at the DEF about how “Chesters get what they deserve,” and I initially excluded any person convicted of child sex crimes from my research. I didn't want to speak with them, partly because they were monsters and partly because I didn't think I was emotionally capable of being around them. Even after witnessing Mr. Roberts' trauma, I continued to avoid any person convicted of these crimes. And then Mr. Thomas and Mr. Watkins repositioned my fieldwork with their talk of Human laws and crimes that Humans don't commit. This led me to interview and observe nine so-called Chesters in one unit during my fieldwork, to try to understand their perspectives and practices. But this research focuses on the dozens of individuals who are not labelled sex offenders to understand how they become Human. This is the perspective that dominates the chapter. Someone else will have to do the work of complicating and fully understanding the ‘non-human’ sex offender.<sup>lvi</sup> That being said, an awful truth is that Chesters suffer tremendously in the DEF prison system.

State administrators do a shit job of protecting people convicted of child sex crimes. During classification processes, they mark Chesters as SOs, or Sex Offenders, on paper forms, in computer databases, and through housing priorities. While administrators attempt to house most individuals convicted of such crimes in specific units, there are too many people labeled SO, and

ultimately, they are disbursed across the compound. Most correctional staff speak in hushed tones when discussing this constructed population because they worry about violence breaking out in units if ‘inmates’ found out who was sleeping in the cell next door. These staff still demonstrate disgust for SOs, but they also worry that a worker will get hurt if they don’t keep the conviction secret. Many staff also react viscerally to sex offenders and attempt to avoid conversations or contact with them. While State policies emphasize the importance of avoiding fraternizing with all captives, most staff, especially COs, develop some relationality with incarcerated people. But sex offenders rarely gain such privileges with staff. There is also a vocal minority of correctional officers who openly speak about these crimes, often linking the conversations with peoples’ names in the presence of non-sex offenders. In these moments, captives pause for the briefest moment before continuing on with their activity, pretending they didn’t hear. But we all know they did.

When individuals convicted of child sex crimes arrive at the prison, classification officers follow most of the same intake procedures that they do with non-SOs. Officers remain professional – meaning they only speak about approved topics relating to prison policy and in measured tones, do not touch the new arrival unless required to, and get all necessary paperwork signed – but the moment the person leaves the office, small talk begins about how another “child fucker” now lives at the DEF. Most people in the room usually shake their head from side to side and mutter a few epithets while the officer carefully places the paperwork into the captive’s folder and types notes into the computer system. As the new arrival leaves the office, the unit manager provides the person with pieces of paper marked with their crimes. One officer remarked that he hopes “inmates see that paper” because the SO would be in “a world of

trouble.” When I asked why they couldn’t leave the crime off the paper, the unit manager remarked that “it’s policy to have their crimes on their criminal documents.”

Soon after Mr. Roberts arrived at the DEF, people demanded to see his paperwork so they could look at his convicted crimes. They specifically wanted to see if he had been convicted of child sex offenses. I saw this same scenario play out sixteen times over the course of fieldwork. Unit managers would send new arrivals to their cells with paperwork of their crime convictions and then someone would demand to see the documents. If the person handed them over for inspection and nothing inappropriate was found, they would not face immediate threats or beatings, though some men and women would intimidate the new arrival to see if he acted like a victim (more on that below). Most new arrivals provided the paperwork, but the few who refused were automatically assumed to be Chesters. Most of the time, these individuals did have child sex crime convictions. Some even called their relatives and had them check the new arrival’s criminal records online. DEF captives had clear processes for determining who someone was, and what they were, through papered and documented practices.

Interestingly, individuals convicted of sex crimes all complained about how their paperwork determined who they were in the eyes of other captives and staff, because it left out a lot of the context. Mr. Roberts worried that his crime sounded worse than it was because of State language: sexual penetration of a minor under the age of 13, bodily harm. Mr. Burris, a 54-year-old Caucasian man incarcerated for four years, advised that his papers “didn’t tell the whole story” because he was only convicted of child pornography and not for any physical crimes. And Mr. Seda, a 32-year-old Puerto Rican man incarcerated for one year, explained that his paperwork “makes me sound like a predator.” But many non-sex offenders argued that Chesters’ conviction papers let them know exactly who they were. Mr. Thomas took Mr. Roberts’

paperwork and passed it along to Mr. Arroyo and Mr. Watkins, who then gave it to other people living in the unit. Within one day, Mr. Roberts went from being a likely SO to a confirmed Chester who had to be removed from the unit. In the end, Mr. Roberts' papers were left on the pod table for all to see; he never retrieved them because he was too scared to leave his cell.

Classification papers served as the first materials that provided evidence of Chesters' non-human activities, but the documents only told a small portion of the stories. These narratives left out the gender and exact age of the victim as well as how long the crime went on. Captives' families and friends filled in the missing details by going online and performing simple browser searches with the suspected or confirmed Chesters' name and location. Non-SOs often asked basic questions of all new arrivals, such as their full names, where they lived before they were imprisoned, and quick family histories. Many of these men and women then provided this information to their kinship networks who would perform a computer search on the new arrival. When Mr. Thomas advised that Mr. Roberts' unit members "checked his papers," they meant that the papers provided the means to establish his non-human status but not all of the important details. It turns out that, like State workers, many captives had premade forms that began with paper 'truths' that manifested through online documents.

The men who targeted Mr. Roberts constructed narratives of precision that remove context from the Chesters' everyday life, turning him into abstract crime. In chapter two, I used Susan A. Phillips' (2012: 47) definition of narratives of precision as processes that "censor parts of a story, [to] strategically remove individuals from certain social contexts, emphasize those same individuals within other contexts, and subsequently manufacture key images that justify the shape of police action." Most captives understand that State systems create paper versions of people that serve to turn them into decontextualized moments in time. They worry non-

incarcerated people view them as nothing more than crime itself and that most people believe crime must be eradicated. But then many of these same individuals, with these similar concerns, proceed to demand State classification papers from new arrivals in attempts to seek out individuals to mark. There are no long narratives on this paper, no explanations of the criminal acts from the new arrival, no historical depth about the context of the crime. Only words like “sexual penetration of a minor,” “criminal sexual communication with a child,” or “sexually oriented materials harmful to minors.” These words demonstrate to non-sex offenders that a Chester has arrived, and punishment practices and further investigation should ensue. Non-SOs take the paperwork and follow specific guidelines (though not always in a particular order) that serve to punish and banish the new arrival. Chesters are threatened, beaten, banished, and purposefully removed from social and material relationships.

When the crimes of those labelled sex offender become known, DEF men and women immediately exclude them from Human. These are usually sexual activities with children including looking at or communicating with a child in a sexual manner, rape or assault, and even sexually thinking about children though this one is harder to police. If an individual participates in any of these activities, their Human status is not only suspect, it is often non-existent. Many assume that if they allow these actions to “go unchecked,” then society will be at risk, with multiple captives speaking about how “the vulnerable must be protected.” This narrative follows the “master” fantasy that Human has to manage and regulate non-humans’ actions. But to be Human also means that adults sexually intermingle exclusively with other socially acceptable adults.

When I told captives that it seemed to me that their actions were similar to State practices which they abhor and cause so much pain, they all advised, in some version, that the big



difference was their work ensured the “real danger was removed from the world.” Mr. Thomas explained that Human has to get rid of things that only “live to destroy.” Mr. Watkins said that “Chesters ain’t like you and me” because they preyed on vulnerable people. Mr. Allego, a Mexican-American captive of fifteen years, stated that “fucking Chesters only take and don’t offer anything to the world.” And Mr. Ruiz advised that sex offenders “fuck everything up.” There was not one non-SO willing to admit the similarities between their actions towards Chesters and correctional worker’s actions towards themselves. In many peoples’ opinions, State employees enjoyed their work and ignored the pain they caused, whereas incarcerated people did not enjoy “getting rid” of Chesters and their actions prevented more pain. It was painfully obvious to me that non-SOs acted similarly to the COs they despised when they threatened, ignored, banished, and beat those labelled sex offenders and that they caused a lot of agony. They physically attacked numerous people they thus categorized, often leading to phone calls to the victim’s loved ones back home who then worried about the safety of their friends and relatives. Correctional officers also had to break up fights, hand out write-ups, and clean up blood and other physical substances left after beatings. And everyone in the unit lived through more lockdowns and material restrictions. They caused a lot of pain, but it seemed that attacking and banishing Chesters was viewed as both important and necessary.

Captives also create a hierarchy of Chester sexual actions that dictate exactly how much punishment should be doled out demonstrating the importance of their families’ investigations in new arrivals. Sexual contact of any kind with a child younger than five is automatically considered the most egregious, though men raping those considered “young boys” reap the worst repercussions. In these scenarios, Chesters must be banished immediately by either removing them to SEG or killing them, though the latter happens rarely. Sexual acts with a child younger

than 12 are also considered an egregious violation of Human law, but captives usually begin with threats and intimidation before escalating to physical altercations and banishment. Once a child reaches the age of 13, things get a little murkier. If a male adult performs sexual acts with a male child between 13 and 15, they are still considered disgusting and deviant non-humans, leading most captives to begin the removal process. But sexual acts with a girl between these same ages do not merit the same disdain. In fact, the individuals convicted of these crimes might even be allowed to continue within the Human category and might not be banished, or turned into Chesters at all. If adults have any sexual contact or longings for children aged 16 or older, many frown upon but do not exhibit outright disgust for these individuals. They are still Human.

In this DEF context, constructing Human is partially about policing sexuality. Most captives adhere to a sexual binary that marks distinct morally innate characters replete with appropriate activities. The dominant opinion is that men should only have sex with women, adult or otherwise. Men who have sex with men are often considered less than, weak, or not men at all.<sup>lvii</sup> While some people do not adhere to this specific version of homophobia, it is a dominant perspective. Many men openly speak about how it is completely okay to perform any sexual acts *on*, not with, women, including rape. Mr. Delgado, a Hispanic man incarcerated for over six years, advised that men need sex more than women and that they need to “take pussy whenever and wherever we want.” He added “I love fucking women...The worst part about prison is that I can’t just roll over on my woman when I want it.” Mr. Thomas disagreed with rape but understood the act as one of male necessity, stating that if there “was enough women for all the men, maybe rape wouldn’t be a problem.” I heard similar sentiments about male ownership of women from over 31 incarcerated men and 17 correctional officers.<sup>lviii</sup> For these same men, the only acceptable sexual act *on* men is rape. Numerous captives spoke about how they can’t

understand “why gays do that to themselves,” referring to fellatio and anal sex with other men. Mr. Bell, a Black incarcerated man of two years told me that he kept his attraction to men a secret because he didn’t want other captives “thinking I’m a victim.” He described constant harassment from his peers about his presumed sexuality and how they would treat him “like a bitch” if he liked “dick” so much. While I only observed Mr. Bell’s harassment four times during my fieldwork, he was constantly worrying about keeping his sexuality a secret and making sure he performed specific versions of DEF-approved masculinity.<sup>lix</sup> The main form of sanctioned masculinity he participated in was threatening and beating Chesters. From my observations and the statements of dozens of captives, it is clear that sexuality can often be, but not exclusively, about dominating an Other including physically assaulting them. While rape is always about power, for these participants, power often equates only to violent domination. These beliefs and actions directly link sexuality and violence, turning sexual acts into violence itself. And to be powerful (read violent) is to be socially constructed as Man. This/These Man/Men (pl.) cannot have sexual acts performed on them. They are the doers, the penetrators, the violators, the dominators. Feminists have made clear the long histories of these sexist and misogynistic ideals and actions, emphasizing that controlling sexuality disciplines marginalized peoples for the benefit of patriarchal hierarchies and constructing the Human category (Brownmiller 1975 [1993]; hooks 1984 [2000]; Lorde 1984). DEF men demonstrate that these horrific practices continue, often unabated, in State facilities.

When Chesters perform sexual acts on children, they violate the sexual hierarchies that exist within DEF assumptions. It is completely acceptable or at least Human to perform sexual acts on women, including violent actions such as rape, but it is abhorrent to do so with children, especially kids labelled male. I observed Mr. Thomas and his unit cohort constantly speaking

about how Mr. Roberts might have raped a boy. In these moments, they would whisper to each other about how the boy “has no chance in life,” and question “How will he grow up to be a man?” They showed looks of concern and clasped their hands as if in prayer. For many people, to sexually assault a young boy is to take away any possibility for his future manhood and, therefore, his ability to dominate. In Ms. Tona’s unit, multiple people spoke about creating a prison charity for the relatives of boys raped by men. While they never created this program, two people drafted prison club charters or asked me to find contact information for people “on the outside” who knew of similar organizations. In this construct, molesting or raping a boy ruins his chances for power because the victim will, most likely, never be a real man. These same men consider raping and molesting girls to be a problem of timing and property ownership, with many asking why the Chester couldn’t have “waited a little bit longer,” “held off until she wasn’t a girl anymore,” and worried about the girl’s “innocence” (referring to her virginity). These violent actions are inappropriate because puberty has not yet set in. A prepubescent girl should not be sexually touched because purity still exists. Most male captives link a girl’s purity to her virginity, demanding that men not perform a sexual gaze at their preteen relatives because it might “give her ideas.” In this sense, girls and women are simultaneously susceptible to both male predators and their own natural desires to be dominated. Again, following a long history of patriarchal violence, constructed virginity and purity becomes the marker for many captives’ assumptions about female sexuality, femininity, and power (Valenti 2009). In this construct, girls and women are possessions that must be protected from and controlled by men. From this perspective, to be Woman is to be naturally dominated and inferior.

By performing sexual acts on minors, Chesters also turn children into victims, and multiple captives asserted that “no one wants to be a victim.” Mr. Thomas repeatedly talked

about how “Victims get fucked” and that they “act like little girls.” Mr. Dominguez, a Hispanic man incarcerated for six years, worried that victims couldn’t be trusted because they “acted like bitches.” And Mr. Allego described victims as “dogs who beg for everything because they have nothing.” Victims are weak partially because they lack masculinity. At the DEF, many captives assign the victim label to individuals who refuse to fight back when assaulted and when they allow other people to take their material possessions. When a person enters the compound, there are some who use their body to aggressively bump the new arrival or punch them in their chest to see if an altercation will ensue, something I observed 11 times. This process, known as bulldogging and heart-checks,<sup>lx</sup> provides evidence of the new captive’s masculinity and gender. Most DEF incarcerated people argue that a man will react violently and become aggressive, but victims allow themselves to be dominated in every possible way. I did witness three examples of men becoming victims when they did not confront an aggressor or did not become aggressive when someone took their material possessions. Some people routinely physically assault victims, steal their belongings, and rape them. Victims don’t fight back. They accept their natural social positions. To be Victim is to either have your masculinity stripped away or to not be ‘Man’ at all. Captives who identify as anything other than heterosexual are also natural victims because they allow themselves to be sexually dominated by Men. Many people assumed that to be a “fag” requires some type of penetration which would preclude them from the male category and mark them as weak. In these cases, heterosexuality becomes interconnected with masculinity to distinguish victims from Man. This linkage of sexuality and gender creates the victim category itself. So, when Chesters attack children, they take away the possibility that young boys will become Man, or they steal girls’ purity which belongs to a Man and turns the girl and her male “owner” into victims. When Chesters break this Human law, the violence that ensues is not

actually about the vulnerability of children; it's about how these sex-offenders attack gender and sexual rules that govern masculinity. To be Human, then, is to be Man, and these constructed categories require the power to dominate and control. These captives seek to create a better world by constructing ideal gender binaries that can be policed, violently if necessary. These men and women participate in world-making actions that exist within the fantasy that one can be master of self, creature, and earth.

### **Restricting Mobility, Controlling Human**

In chapter three, I demonstrated that many male correctional officers understand the prison compound as a place that threatens their masculinity. These men feel controlled by locks, fences, mechanized doors, prison administrators, scheduling routines, and the dirty work required of them. A tight linkage between gender and mobility destabilizes their naturalized hierarchies and repositions their bodies and lives closer to Woman and Captive. These feelings upend their sense of dominion leading to affective threat that looms everywhere across the facility. And because many non-security workers already socially position COs closer to incarcerated people, many officers seek solace and counsel only from other security workers, which serves to compound feelings of social isolation. Many of these COs then lash out against others and turn to substance abuse to deal with their masculine hysteria and the perpetual threats on and off prison grounds.

Many DEF captives also link mobility and masculinity and they utilize this linkage to create Human. These participants couple constructions of masculinity and Man with assumptions about movement similar to how correctional officers create these same categories. They worry that they become less manly in prison because they have little to no control over their physical movement. Every time I met with captives, someone would assert that "men shouldn't be kept in

cages” or that “COs treat them worse than animals.” In these moments, men would clench their fists, grit their teeth, or furrow their brows as they continued on about how cells and fences are an affront to their manhood. They would also become visibly agitated – bodies slightly shaking and their voices quivering – when COs forced them back into their cells earlier than they expected. Multiple men constantly spoke about their desire for open movement because men should “be free to move around” and that Human should never be “locked down,” even as they continuously forced Chesters into Seg where they would live with harsher movement restrictions.

Because captives worried that restricted movement strips them of their masculinity and Human status, similar to correctional officers, they tend to emphasize their disdain for the materials that confined them and demonstrate anxiety about being treated as Woman. I observed over 30 men complaining that fences and locked cells signified their inferiority and womanly status. Mr. Sanchez, whom we met in chapter two, explained that:

Being locked down makes me feel like a bitch, you know. They send us to this prison and then they stick us in little cages for days on end...Men need space to move around, to fight, to fuck...to hunt. It's in our nature to keep moving around...They don't treat us like we're humans here. They fucking treat us like we're bitches.

And Mr. Samson, whom we also met in chapter two, concurs:

This place isn't for humans. It's not even a place for animals. Prisons should only be for kiddy fuckers who can't be cured. It shouldn't be for men like me. We don't do well here because we need open space...Prisons aren't places for men.

Multiple men repeated similar statements and concerns during our semi-structured interviews, when I sat with them to eat, or when I worked with them during their shifts. Some even went as far as to demand that I write down how prison administrators treat them like animals and like they aren't men, or more specifically treated them like women. In these cases, they almost

always referred to restricted movement as the main factor in their emasculation and dehumanization, pointing to the fences or their cells as they spoke because these materials literally confine them but also control access to resources. It's clear that the enjoyment of mobility and masculinity is not just a concern for correctional officers.

As these feelings overwhelm them, many captives attempt to control the movement of Others as a means to assert their masculinity and Human status. In the previous section I described how incarcerated men and women utilize papered practices and physical violence to identify non-humans in their midst. They banish these individuals to cells or to protective custody, often placing them in SEG. When captives live in SEG, administrators lock them in their cell, alone, for upwards of 23 hours a day. There is no tier time in SEG and rec time means standing in a cage outside and alone for approximately one hour. Individuals' physical movement becomes even more restricted at these locations than at all the other security levels. Making matters worse, administrators also further restrict access to material resources, with some being denied basic writing tools, paper, and even letters from home. This means that as SEG captives find themselves living with extremely punishing movement regulations, many lack the materials necessary to stop inanimate things, such as walls and floors, from pulsing and rocking. This perfect storm of their bodies being physically restrained as supposedly inanimate materials move around them pushes them down animacy hierarchies that makes them question if they were ever alive to begin with. Mr. Ramirez explains:

When I was in SEG, I didn't have nothing to help me out. I had trouble breathing and feeling the walls constantly move was almost too much. Here [the level IV unit], I have my little tricks to help me out when that happens. But in SEG I had nothing. There were days when I didn't know if I was still alive or if I had died and was stuck in this prison like in limbo, or something.



Once Mr. Roberts was moved to SEG, I observed him begging COs for his personal items because he said they would make “me feel better.” When asked, he told me that he wanted the echoes to stop and the floors to stop vibrating. He advised that because everything was so quiet in his unit, every little noise “blasts my ears” and “scrambles my brain.” After two months, he banged his head into the wall until he was placed under a psych review. He kept muttering “I don’t belong here” and that “nothing’s real.” After a few weeks had passed, he advised that he believes he had a psychotic break because “everything seemed to be moving except me.” The combination of restricted personal movement and constant object movement created a world that didn’t make sense.

When I spoke to the men in Mr. Robert’s former unit, they laughed and cheered at his suffering, specifically demonstrating glee at how they restricted their former unit mate’s physical movement. Some people told me that “things like that need to be locked down” and that “Chesters don’t need be moving around with convicts.” Mr. Thomas blatantly advised that he felt better knowing that Mr. Roberts was trying to kill himself, stating that “he was already dead anyways.” Because many people equate physical movement with aliveness, weaponizing mobility controls provide them with the ability to kill beings they consider non-human. In fact, Chesters are often thought of as dead-like things the moment their true identity is discovered. And dead-like things shouldn’t move. Through their violence, they reassert the natural state of their world: dead things don’t move and Human must control or exterminate beings hierarchically beneath them.

Multiple prison units employed similar strategies for controlling Chesters’ physical movement. In one area, captives would steal a Chesters’ possessions and threaten him with further violence if he snitched and did not enter into Protective Custody. In this unit, Ms. Tona

took great pride in taking away hygiene products from people identified as Chesters, demonstrating a clear attempt to remove the possibility that this person would be able to generate feelings of movement in the same way she did. In another unit, Mr. Samson bulldogged a new arrival to the point that he only left his cell to shower and never attended tier or rec time. Even then Mr. Samson complained that the new arrival shouldn't be "moving around so much" because that's not "what he's supposed to be doing." Across the compound, Chesters were threatened, beaten, banished, disappeared, and exterminated through mobility controls that incarcerated people enacted daily. Most COs and non-security staff understood that this violence regularly occurred, but few workers offered little more than a shake of their head, jokes about the victims deserving their suffering, and outright praise for perpetrators.

During the acts of violence and after the banishing had occurred, most captives shared more materials, played games and joked with each other at rec time, ate in groups, and spoke to COs in a less demeaning manner. When threats and beatings against Chesters were in progress, captives would share paper, sugars, and even soaps with everyone in the unit other than the non-Human target. They also played card games and joked with each other during rec and tier times about how they showed those "kid-fuckers how to handle business like a man" and that "victims crying makes me feel better." They also shared meals together, with some people offering up their saved spices and snacks during television shows or game playing. All of these actions continued for only a short time after the Chester had been banished, with many removing themselves from these sharing practices until the next Chester arrived, starting the threats and beatings all over again. In these units, after the Chester had been sent to Protective Custody, many captives also spoke with correctional officers about the good work they did in getting rid

of the sex-offenders from their units. And most COs responded with congratulations or quiet respect, with many acknowledging the great acts that captives had performed.

When I noticed these patterns emerging across the facility, I originally thought that these actions constituted evidence of payment for violence rendered. This idea proved wrong almost immediately. While some captives do share or pay in materials for protection or for services of all kinds, there was no evidence that the physical violence for the sake of restricting movement was ever about material rewards. Instead, most of the individuals who participated in these actions came together as a result of their violence and formed temporary, but powerful, communities. People who lived in the same unit, but didn't always interact with each other outside of basic greetings and questions about prison rules, ate, joked, watched TV, played games, and shared materials with each other. Through their violence, they found a different way to live together instead of just existing as atomistic beings. They also created pathways to identify correctional officers as people also living inside prisons. COs were still captors, but for a few moments, it was not their only identity. During one of these Chester community timeframes, Mr. Samson even stated that "officers are dicks, but they're still human." Importantly, these groups shift quickly and never consisted of the same members or performed the same communal actions because prison administrators often moved incarcerated people throughout State facilities. New communities would form with numerous ways of living together as a result of the linkage between mobility and violence. These relationships constantly change how captives identify Human and how they feel throughout their everyday life.

These communities and moments of embracing COs within Human status only lasted a few weeks because prison administrators demand that all acts of violence be met with punishing movement restrictions, often in the form of lockdowns. While threatening, beating, and

banishing Chesters provided pathways for captives to become Human through their power to control movement and perform violence, these actions created punishing blowback that disrupted the Human category. After Mr. Roberts moved to SEG under PC status, prison administrators placed the entire unit on lockdown, restricted access to material and social relations, and wrote-up most captives in the units. As I demonstrated in earlier chapters, these actions serve to create unsettling mobilities that upend many incarcerated people's animacy and human hierarchies, emasculate those who cling to masculinity as a form of power, and create an ambience of threat throughout the facility. Once again, many captives begin to rip paper, attack COs, and stockpile hygiene products as they attempt to reassert animacy and Human hierarchies and generate feelings of movement. It is only when another Chester arrives that there is communal relief through the ritual purification of non-humans through physical violence of mobility controls. Many captives need Chesters to construct Human and demonstrate their status through the violent actions they perform, and their most prominent on-going method of violence is continual movement restrictions. For these men and women, to be Human is, once again, to dominate and control. Captives and COs have much in common, even though they pretend there is no social overlap. And they demonstrate their clearest similarities when they construct animacy and human hierarchies when seeking to create an ideal world.

### **Material and Temporal Human-Making**

Mr. Lara rushed past the correctional officer trying to get to the Education Building across the compound. His level III Unit status allowed him to be out of his cell for most of the day, but policy only allowed him to move to other areas – Education, Medical, Chapel, Gym – at certain times, and he had to make sure that he didn't get maneuvered into another space by the staff. After more than two decades inside prisons, he was used to this routine: move quickly to

your approved destination, but don't move so quick that it can be confused for jogging or running. Move too slowly and you risk being accused by staff of loitering and being "up to no good." Finding a balance between appropriate speeds proved dangerous because upon arrival to this facility with two life sentences, Mr. Lara found himself written up three times and sent to SEG for either moving too slowly or too quickly. He now knew to walk at a brisk pace, keeping one foot on the ground at all times as the other foot moved towards his destination. As long as he got to the first fence – a distance of about 150 feet – within 30 to 45 seconds but not faster than 15 to 20, he would be fine. But sometimes he just felt like running as fast as he could or simply standing still in the middle of the compound. But he never did. He didn't want to end up back in SEG. The consequences were too severe.

But today, Mr. Lara was excited to get to Education because there was going to be a small celebration for members of the dog-training program. A lucky few got to raise and train dogs to make them more adoptable to people living outside the prison. He loved this program, though it was hard to part with his dog once the training ended and the dog found a permanent home. He was currently waiting for his new dog and so the celebration would be a welcome break in his everyday routine. He heard there might be cake and some soda. The thought of these uncommon treats made his legs move a little too quickly, and Sgt. Vega stepped in front of him with almost no warning. "Where are you going so fast, inmate," he yelled with accusation dripping from his teeth. With that tone, Mr. Lara knew there would be no cake today. He stopped instantly and assumed a subservient tone and bodily posture, making sure his eyeline stayed firmly at the Sergeant's chest. He explained that he was in a hurry because the dog program celebration was in a few minutes and the COs in his unit forgot to release him for the event. Sgt. Vega heard this explanation as a condemnation of correctional officers and told him to remember

that he's an inmate who has no rights because he committed a crime. The Sgt. didn't have to say anything else. He turned around and walked back toward his unit, silently cursing his legs for moving too quickly.

He returned to his unit and entered his cell trying to hold back tears of anger and frustration. They wouldn't make him cry. But as he sat in the small cell, he felt his body tighten and his breath constrict. He imagined himself running through a field, trampling over flowers that pushed up from CO graves. But those daydreams led to him imagining he could be free from this prison and live in a world not made of concrete. He dreamed of meeting a woman who he could build a house for and raise a family in the middle of a forest where no one could find them. As he created this future in his cell, his breath constricted and the floors rippled. Panicked, he walked out of his cell, sat at a metal table that was bolted to the floor and poured two packets of sugar into a paper cup half-filled with water. He stirred the water until the sugar had almost completely dissolved and then lightly poured it onto a small piece of cloth. Once dried, the sugar-water would stiffen the cloth, known as a paño,<sup>lxi</sup> and create a canvas for drawing or painting. He would then share these creations with incarcerated people all over the compound. Sometimes, captives even commissioned specific paños from him for special events. He felt less restricted when he made this art and when he passed along the creations to others. More importantly, he existed only in this moment. He breathed a bit easier and the floor didn't toss as much. As he waited for the paño to dry, his breath returned to normal and he felt more stable in his seat. The other convicts didn't see him gasping for air or seeming to wobble on a moving floor. He was lucky because if they saw him in that state, they might think of him as a victim. And there was nothing worse than being a victim.

With the preparation complete for his paño, Mr. Lara grabbed a few pieces of lined paper and began writing letters to his family. He wrote about his love for them, what he watched on television the night before, and his favorite artistic creations. The longer he wrote the more comfortable his breathing became, and he began to feel more like himself again. He needed to write these letters because they reminded him that, despite being incarcerated, he was still alive and that there were people who cared for him. He drew some pictures on the letters home: bright suns, hands in prayer, wind sweeping across the desert, and flowers growing in parched earth. He folded the paper and stuffed it into a small envelope he had purchased through commissary, kissing the small item before he placed it on his narrow counter. He felt better. His heart no longer raced and the floor was completely still. He laid on his bed and covered his body as much as possible with the State-issued blanket. He thought about what this paño would look like and how much paper he had in his cell. He smiled as he imagined how many people would see his creations, and when he closed his eyes, drifting to sleep, he felt that nobody could lock him down.

Many DEF captives constantly informed me that time felt different at the prison. They would point to the fact that there were no clocks in their units and that most cannot tell you what exact time it is, but rather, tell you where they are supposed to be based upon movement patterns. I observed multiple people point to how sunlight cast shadows in their cells and advise me that it was almost time for me to go. Within a few minutes, COs would often arrive to inform me that I had to leave because Count had begun. Captives would also listen for sounds of COs unlocking fences or the calls of *golondrinas*<sup>lxii</sup> to know that movement was about to begin.<sup>lxiii</sup> Some people described, and I observed, how time slowed down for them as material incarceration practices upended their animacy hierarchies. For others, time becomes an abstract concept, much like their

papered crimes, that prison administrators weaponize as they threaten write-ups that lengthen their sentences. This form of time is constructed through punitive actions designed to threaten people with indefinite punishment. Time feels different depending on all of these practices and contexts.

In this final chapter section, I examine how incarcerated people couple mobility, paper, and time to construct what it means to be Human. Many DEF captives utilize everyday materials to create artworks that they then pass along and share with other people whom they designate Human. Through their creative acts and material movements, these men and women manifest an audience that allows the creator to be seen through their artwork. Others write letters and produce poetry utilizing paper to generate personal narratives and stories that centers their individuality. These actions render linear time meaningless and helps these men and women to place themselves within a temporal stasis that simultaneously stops the assumptive natural flow of time and constructs Human as beings who do not exist on their captors' time. Instead of relying upon administrative, punitive notions of time, these captives produce a temporality that allows them to not only survive incarceration, but to also create worlds that administrators cannot fully control. Time and punishment transform into futile endeavors demonstrating that Human becomes possible when captives exercise the power of mobility.

### **Small Materials, Big Creations**

Sugar shocked me at the Desert Echo Facility. Small packets can be found all over the compound: in cells, in pockets, on metal tables, and inside people's bodies. Many captives pour a few packets into their morning coffee while others douse their breakfast with sugar in an attempt to turn the bland food into a sweet meal. A majority of people ingest multiple packets of sugar every day, with many claiming they could not make it through their routines without a sugary



jolt. Sidney W. Mintz (1985) could have written another fascinating book about sugar consumption and capitalist enterprises had he been given the chance to observe life at the Desert Echo Facility. It was with Mintz's ideas in mind that I began to pay attention to sugar consumption across the compound, focusing on what the small amounts of this substance meant to people living here. After observing daily life, I was not shocked by the fact that people consumed so much sugar or that they argued they needed it to "get through their day." What surprised me was its importance in producing artistic creations.

As explained in this section's ethnographic vignette, many DEF captives use sugar to produce drawings and paintings. I observed 21 people pour sugar into cups of water, stir the contents, and then pour the sugar-water onto *paños*. Some even turned the sugar-water into a glue by adding up to 15 packets of sugar and some toothpaste into a small cup of water. They would stir this for a few minutes and then sit it in the sun to congeal, stirring every couple of hours until the final product was ready. They would use this sugar-glue to adorn their *paños* with beads made from toilet paper they had rolled into small balls and then dipped in fruit punch water to give them color.

The drawings and designs of *paños* differed depending on the unit. In the 4Bs, captives favored creating items that emphasized their favorite football team, the Oakland Raiders. These *paños* had Raider iconography that included swords, helmets, skulls, and male bodies with sculpted biceps. But Raider *paños* also had imagery of flowing rivers, strong winds, and quicksand with bright reds, blues, and yellows. The men and women in this unit often advised that they liked to add these features into their *paños* because the imagery made "people feel the movement of the *pañño*" and that things moving in a painting "made the *pañño* feel alive." In the 3A unit, most people drew and painted *paños* that featured stars glowing and exploding, moons

and planets rotating or orbiting a sun, and extraterrestrials hovering over their prison. They utilized mostly blues, greens, whites, and yellows, with one advising that the colors contrasted with the drab environment where they lived and made him feel “human again.” Another unit in the 1Bs drew and painted *paños* that featured birds – such as doves and *golondrinas* – trees, mountains, and blue skies. In these creations, birds flew or perched atop trees (often singing), skies were filled with large clouds that shaded the desert, and mountains remained jagged but often snow covered or slightly hidden in a haze of dust. These individuals used mostly browns, blues, whites, and reds on their *paños*. All of these captives used sugar-water to create a canvas, glue items onto their drawings and paintings, and mixed fruit punch powder to create the colors they desired.

At any given time, many across the compound were in some process of creating *paños* with sugar-water, fruit punch, toilet paper, and cloth. Most days as I sat in prison cells or in the larger unit area, men and women would come up to me and show me the progress of their latest creation. I was always impressed at the ingenuity of using these everyday materials, but the detail in their work was astounding. I could see veins in the arms of Raiders, craters in moons, ripples in water, and feathers on birds. And these artworks had texture. When the sugar-water dried, it often formed uneven ridges that captives then incorporated into their pieces. Some even purposefully dried the *paños* with added texture so their artwork would stand out as a creation of their own. Importantly, because each unit utilized specific colors, iconography, and textures, an astute worker (and almost all captives) could tell where any individual piece was created. The artworks were marked by their creators and their locations, rooting them to a place in the facility.

All of this art was produced with very small materials that many captives had to hide due to restrictive penal policies. Prison administrators worried that if a specific captive accumulated

too many materials, threats that they would create weapons or participate in illicit economies could arise. Because most administrators could never agree on what “too many” actually meant, they would often leave material removal processes up to correctional officers, though most could always point to a prison guideline for assistance.<sup>lxiv</sup> Most captives found ways to hide their materials inside walls, behind personal items in their cells, on tables in the units, inside toilets, and buried or hidden across the landscape. When asked, many people informed that they always knew where these materials could be found at any given moment, but that they had to get to them when COs weren’t paying attention or when movement was allowed. I observed men and women pulling out packets of sugar from their pockets, their cells, from library books, even inside bathrooms behind paper towels. Packets or tubes of sugar, fruit punch, and toothpaste were everywhere.

Many participants also left these items around the compound or inside their unit for others to retrieve and use. They would take a few packets of sugar or squeeze some toothpaste inside a small cup when workers were not around. All but one of these observed captives always left some materials behind. Some would take sugar and leave fruit punch, a few left some toothpaste and took fruit punch, and multiple people took and left a combination of all these materials. These informal trading posts existed in the library, gym, prison units, and kitchen. I’m sure there were more, but most people didn’t want to reveal all their material trading spots for fear that I would purposefully or inadvertently snitch. But it was clear that they formed a sharing group that most prison workers ignored or did not understand because these items were so small and seemed trivial.

But these small materials have big meanings. When these captives make their art, they utilize items deemed trivial by prison staff precisely because these everyday items can be moved

around the compound and hidden easily. Archaeologist Eleanor Conlin Casella (2007) describes the importance of small items in penal settings through her work at the Walnut Street Prison and the Old Rhode Island Penitentiary. Her scholarship demonstrates how people hid small items in holes in prison walls, created spaces for note passing, and cultivated landscapes through material sharing. These practices allowed people to survive penal punishment and may have even created novel forms of relationality. Incarcerated men and women at the DEF hide materials in their clothing, pass them along to others, and leave these items in places that fellow captives can access. Most employees do not enter captive bathrooms or search through the library in Education, do not dig up earth around the facility, or search for holes in the walls. Captives know this because they actually live on the compound. To call these items small is to exert the privilege of being a captor and ignore the ramifications of restricting resources to people labelled captive. These items are only small if you have access to a larger pool of material resources. Incarcerated people understand this asymmetrical power very well, and they utilize staff ignorance to their advantage by travelling, hiding, and sharing items deemed small and trivial to those of us who hold captives but do not consider their daily lives.

Numerous people explained how creating art with these small items makes them feel as if they are not just “animals locked in cages” and that their works serve as a physical manifestation of their existence. Mr. Lara stated that,

Making my *paños* gets me through. It takes a lot of focus to do this and when people see that I made this, they know I’m here. It makes them see that I’m not some animal they can keep locked up forever. I’m still fucking human...A lot of people know my *paños* just by looking at them. They see the colors and the skies, and they know it’s me. I take pride in that. People see me in this [pointing to his current *pañó*]. That’s important.

Mr. Daniels, an African American man incarcerated for eight months, added:

I love making these *paños*. I didn't know they were called that until I came here. But they really do make me feel better. Like, I'm still locked up, but I'm not dead. I'm still breathing...I think it's because I can make something out of nothing. I take the measly shit they give us and make something that came from me. They can't take that away. They can try. But I'll always find a way to make something out of nothing.

These statements exemplify how small items allow incarcerated people to create artistic works that many need to feel alive and Human. Mr. Lara asserts that his *paños* are not just representations of himself, but actually processes of *seeing* him. When he says that "People see me in this," he acknowledges that looking at the *pañño* is an act of looking at the creator: Mr. Lara himself. When he creates his art, he produces physical reminders of his existence because his art is who he is. In these moments, he takes away the decontextualized penal identity placed upon him, often called a jacket, and demands that his audience see him through his creative acts. And he clearly states who he is: "I'm still fucking human." For his part, Mr. Daniels directly links power to his acts of creations when he argues that he "can make something out of nothing" and that "They can't take that away." Like Mr., Lara, his art is a physical manifestation of his existence, but Mr. Daniels makes clear that creating *paños* make him feel that he is still in control of his life. He can take the "measly shit" administrators provide and turn small things into a sense of aliveness. After all, he's "locked up, but [he's] not dead." Mr. Lara and Mr. Daniels artworks create the means by which they feel alive and Human, and they directly engage the asymmetrical power dynamics on the compound with items as 'insignificant' as sugar, water, fruit punch powder, and toothpaste.

These creations also demonstrate the importance of sight for many DEF captives. Vision has long been privileged as the dominant bodily sense in so-called western or american perspectives, especially in prisons (Foucault 1977; Stewart 2005). Though this dissertation

troubles ocularcentrism, it is important to acknowledge how some disappeared peoples feel alive and Human through the power of sight, specifically by being seen. With their bodies and lives hidden and decontextualized, Mr. Lara and Mr. Daniels demonstrate how they continue to be seen in penal settings. Their art proves their existence and provides material reminders of their Human status. The power of sight grounds many disciplinary aspects – such as using eyes, bodily and digital, to record and control movements – and manifests a creative form of sight that cannot be felt by their captors. Their sense of aliveness and Human status is beyond the control of prison administrators and literally in the eyes of those who see and witness their art. Their creative acts provide them with pathways to exercise power throughout sensory disciplinary tactics.

But these artworks can only produce these feelings if they are moved and shared across the compound. I watched as numerous people passed their *paños* to captives at Chow, Education, and inside their units. These items travelled all over the compound as they moved between fences, locked gates, and mechanized doors. I observed one *pañó* created in the Unit 1B move all the way to the 5 units over the course of four days. When his *paños* travelled to others, Mr. Lara explained that it made him feel like the “cages can’t hold me.” Another man who wished to remain anonymous advised that his *paños* proved that he isn’t locked up all the time because his creations “are seen by people all over the place, even outside the prison.” And Mr. Daniels told me that he breathes easier knowing that “people are sharing my work.” When they moved the *paños*, they also create the possibility for feelings of aliveness and Human because these materials cannot be contained by the prison movement restrictions., even if they don’t know exactly when their works are being seen. They feel it nonetheless.

Most of the movement occurred through incarcerated people handing artwork off between themselves, but a few COs passed the *paños* to captives and brought some home with them. Ms. Cortes worked in Mr. Lara's unit and always commented on his artwork. On three occasions, I observed her agreeing to take a *pañó* and bring it to the kitchen when she picked up chow. She also provided him with some leftover paint that was previously used to cover the prison walls. Mr. Lara then mixed the provided paint to create new colors for his artwork. Mr. Navarro, a Mexican-American correctional officer of approximately seven years, also moved *paños* from one unit to another when a captive asked him to. When I questioned if he was allowed to participate in this movement, he advised that it was against the rules, but that "sometimes you have to remember these guys are still human and do the little things they ask." I observed six COs moving *paños* across the compound and providing small materials that could be used for creating art with many arguing that it was the "right thing to do."

These COs demonstrate the complications of holding people captive. While many officers feel that captives are threat itself, more than a few have a hard time treating all incarcerated people as threat on a daily basis. The COs and captives who developed these material and mobile relationships were always those who worked and lived in close proximity with each other. These officers would still make demands of their captives, but most refused to write-up individuals unless it was a last resort. Instead, COs would calmly ask why any angry person was upset or provide extra hygiene materials to those who seemed to be having a bad day. Importantly, most people spoke to these COs in measured tones and even joked with the officers, actions that demonstrated respect. And the units where these COs worked had less altercations between COs and captives and between the incarcerated people themselves. It turns out that forming material relationships with captives created a safer environment for everyone involved.

Unfortunately, prison administrators do not feel the same way and force COs to bid for work at different positions every six months. This movement regulation supposedly prevents workers from getting “too close” to captives, but it actually assists in the creation of affective threat because COs and captives are not given many long-term opportunities to form lasting relationships with each other.

But many COs also made overt claims that their captives were “still human,” demonstrating a distinction between themselves of other COs in previous chapters. Ms. Cortes and Mr. Beto, a Mexican-American CO of four years, spoke openly about how hard it is to find a balance between controlling people and treating them as Human. I observed Ms. Cortes providing incarcerated people with extra hygiene materials, food, and even touch. She dropped off extra razors, provided pizza to her workers, and hugged a few men who cried in front of her. When I questioned why she performed these actions, she stated that “sometimes I see my boys in them. It’s hard because I know they’ve done some terrible things, but I always try to remember that they’re still human beings. I would want someone to treat my kids like this if they ever got locked up.” I also observed Mr. Beto providing them with pens and pencils and giving out small pieces of candy to them. When asked, he explained that “most of these guys are in here for one reason or another, but it doesn’t mean they’re not good people...It’s very human to make a mistake. I want these guys to know that.” For these COs, moving artwork and providing material resources offered a demonstration that they still looked upon their captives as Human. Ms. Cortes even went as far as to remind the people in her units that she would “treat you as human beings if you act like it” and became extremely angry at another CO for throwing away captives’ personal items. Mr. Navarro worried that COs who treated incarcerated people poorly gave all officers “a bad image,” arguing that officers are “no better than inmates sometimes.” While these



COs sometimes utilized crime talk and created taphonomic processes to turn living humans into dead-like things, they also formed material relationships that troubled their animacy and Human hierarchies. And many took pride in the fact that they treated incarcerated people with material and movement respect. For some COs, moving materials provided evidence of captive's Human status, but also of their own.

But for many captives and COs, becoming Human also relied upon excluding Chesters from the artwork sharing processes and most officers did not provide those labelled sex-offenders with material support. Mr. Eduardo, a Hispanic-American man incarcerated for 12 years, advised that he never let "Chesters touch my shit because they don't know what it means." Mr. Daniels argued that the importance of his art would be diminished if shared with Chesters because "they're not human." These statements and concerns demonstrated a clear exclusion of those labelled sex-offenders specifically for the construction and maintenance of the Human category, often creating rigid borders between Human and the people and things that were not.

### **Paper People No More: Writing the Individual to Immobilize Time**

Besides sugar, cloth, and toothpaste, many captives actively seek out lined, printing, and construction paper on a daily basis. These men and women use these items to write letters and draw. For many people, these types of paper differ greatly in meaning and usage than other State objects. In previous chapters, I have demonstrated that many incarcerated people understand bureaucratic paper as materials that decontextualize their lives, turning them into abstract notions of crime itself. These papers painfully vibrate within cells, hands, and psyches, causing torturous feelings often rendered invisible. Many also understand these papers as the State itself and so they destroy these items as acts that upend State violence. But still, many people use lined, printing, and construction paper to generate feelings of aliveness and become Human through

personal creative acts. While many use paper for economic endeavors – some individuals sell or barter with their works – most DEF captives utilize paper for personal letters and creations. Clearly, paper provides different meanings and feelings depending on the context at the Desert Echo Facility.

As a former employee, volunteer, and researcher, I was constantly bombarded with requests for paper by DEF captives. Walking across the compound, I would get stopped by incarcerated people asking if I had any paper on me or if I could bring some to their units, hear shouts through cell windows asking if I was stopping by to drop off paper, and get written requests for materials sent to Education (a department that provided me a desk and mailbox). Workers would constantly complain that captives always asked for too much and that I shouldn't give anyone paper because "If you give a mouse a cookie," meaning if you give any captive anything, they're bound to ask for something else because you've proven to be a material sucker. I scoffed at this notion. Many workers stated they didn't provide paper because there were not a lot of material resources due to budget cuts. One teacher even stated that incarcerated people "acted like paper grew on trees." Most COs did not have extra paper and always had the excuse that they never had this material in their possession, though many advised they wouldn't have provided paper even if they had it. I always gave out paper to anyone who asked for it, which gave me the reputation of "that hippie dude" who would give someone "as much paper as we want." This was true because I gave out stacks of paper during my tenure. It was also true that a few people who received paper from me began to ask for other material items, many of which I could not provide without risking permanent banishment from the compound. I was a bit annoyed that they proved the assumptions of workers who perpetuated the "If you give a mouse a cookie" theory, though if I was imprisoned, I might ask for as much as I could get.

But I was fascinated that so many people repeatedly asked for paper and wondered why they desired this specific item so much. After considering and then disproving the argument that it was a gateway material that most asked for to gauge what they could get from someone – most only asked me and non-CO workers for paper (and sometimes pens and pencils) – I started to observe what paper became once I gave it away. For me, it was something of little consequence. An item I could get almost anywhere. A material I didn't use much in my daily life thanks to my laptop sitting on my kitchen counter. For many DEF captives, this small material was a tool for creating feelings of aliveness and an item that could demonstrate their Human status. Like sugar, paper was deemed an important material, not for what it could be sold or traded for, but what it could be creatively transformed into. And the main transformations came about through letter writing and poetry.

### **Writing the Human**

Writing remains a central component of many incarcerated people's daily lives. At any given moment, dozens of people sit in their cells writing letters to their loved ones and creating poetry. For letter writing, many people have developed a form of handwriting that privileges neat and small print as a means to conserve space on each piece of paper. This makes the letters very legible but one may have to squint to read it all clearly. When people write poetry, they tend to print larger and more free-flowing, making the documents easier to see, but sometimes harder to read. All of these actions are done on lined and printing paper that many captives have received from workers or taken from offices when no one was looking.

Many people follow specific routines before and during letter and poetry writing. Most wash their hands, clean the narrow counter where they will write, flatten out the paper to remove as many wrinkles as possible, and breathe deeply as they begin writing. When writing, they also

rarely speak or eat food, though most drink from a beverage they keep next to them. When finished, they flatten out the paper once again and either place it in an envelope for mailing or delicately place it in a folder, between unused papers, or hide it inside books. When asked, many captives advised that they “stash” their letters and poetry because shakedowns can occur at any time and COs can discard and destroy any item without giving an excuse. Most people also write at specific times of the day. I observed many captives writing only either during the morning, afternoon, or evening hours. These writing times were not based on clocks, but rather, on movement schedules. Because administrators always schedule tier, gym, and yard time for specified one or two-hour blocks, most men and women write when they will not be interrupted by scheduled movement. And if writing was to be shared, most people began small conversations with men and women in their units to prepare the item to be seen and passed along throughout the compound. These conversations usually began with references to how good the writer was feeling that day and how they were “about to see something special.” The person hearing this news would often respond with fist bumps, smiles, and further conversation about when the item would be displayed. Overall, I only observed six instances of men and women sharing their letters and poetry, demonstrating that these acts were more for individuals rather than large audiences.

For the purposes of anonymity and because most of the research participants requested their written works remain private, I do not provide replications of any letters or poetry. For these individuals, writing is an act of creation to be done in private and shared only with those closest to them, if to be shared at all. Overall, I read approximately 75 poems and letters from captives living at Level III and IV security ranks. There were a few people who stated that I would be allowed to use their writings if I attached their names to their creations: a fair request.

Because I must maintain some type of anonymity in this research, I had to turn down their offers with my great appreciation for their consideration. This means that I can only describe what I read in these letters and poems and can only write about specific details that some people allow me to provide.

Most captives wrote letters to be mailed to their loved ones back home, never sharing them with their cohort. These letters mostly centered on how much the person missed their loved ones and how sorry they were for not being with them. They would write about how they couldn't wait to touch their children, dream in their own homes, have sex with their partners, and how they couldn't wait to go on a vacation together. Many letters also included drawings and poems that they created for specific loved ones. Unlike letters, poem topics were a bit more diverse. Similar to what Adam Reed (2003) found in a Papua New Guinea prison, some people wrote poems about running, escaping prison, and flying, while others wrote about sex, food, money, and violence. Most of these focused on an individual's capabilities to control personal physical movements or the movement of other people and things. Many poems began with an outlaw running from police officers only to meander into stories of outwitting State workers and vigilante groups seeking to incarcerate the protagonist. During these adventures, men would have sex with women, create wealth for their families, and perform violence and deception. In the end, many of these poems found the individual living without schedules or explicit time constraints. Importantly, the hero of these poems always began with acts of movement that either prison administrators deny to captives – such as running freely and as fast as possible and escaping prisons – or movements deemed impossible, such as flying, only to end with an individual who lives outside of time. Other poems demonstrated a desire to open people's eyes as to the cruel punishment of the American State. These poems never began with open movement, but rather

focused on movement restrictions and the desperation many felt, often comparing captives to caged animals. These poems almost always ended with the creator's plea to be treated as Human and as an individual.

Interestingly, the poetry and letters that many captives wrote mimicked the language that dozens of people used privately with me or in conversations with one another. Countless men and women described how prison workers "don't act like I'm human," treat them like they are "one big group," and how much they wished to be thought of "as an individual." I also observed countless discussions about how prisons are designed to punish collectives and how COs and administrative staff must think captives are hierarchically beneath animals because they care more about dogs than how they suffer. These verbal conversations usually came about after a new policy was announced or instituted, such as a mandatory bedtime of 10:30 PM, or when a Chester was discovered in their midst.

When I openly wondered what letter and poetry writing provided for captives, most advised that these actions generated feelings of Human for the author and creator because writing on paper altered temporality. Mr. Inez, a Chicano man incarcerated for three years advised that "My papers help me deal with all this time. I don't have to worry about how much longer I got in here because I got these papers." Mr. Lara offered that his poetry proved that "they can't keep me locked down forever. They lock this door [pointing to his cell] and tell me I have years left, but they can't control how I do this time." When writing, many people suffering from pulsing walls and rocking floors breathed easier and calmed their bodies. Within minutes of starting to write, these men and women's eyes would stop darting from the floors and the walls and their teeth would unclench. I also never observed a captive destroying their writing papers in the same

ways that they ripped up bureaucratic paper. And 23 people all explained that time felt different after they wrote on non-State paper.

Writing has a long history of being used as both an enslavement tactic and liberative strategy in the united states. euro-american enslavers of African peoples actively prevented, punished, and legally outlawed literacy and writing amongst their captives (Bibb 1849; Davis 2000; NA and James 2000). While this prohibition came about as a result of white fears that literacy and writing could contribute to black uprisings, this form of domination was also about placing racialized Others outside of communal activities (Hager 2013; Williams 2005). For many whites, writing, and literacy actions in general, served as rituals that brought individuals into a religious community. Learning to read and write scripture provided the possibility of salvation, and therefore, a potential future. Children were routinely taught to read and write for the express purpose of crafting persons who could become participants in a religious (after)life, connecting individuals to a temporal framework that included daily duties and continual relationality. Many abolitionists, or those questioning enslavement, argued that keeping captives illiterate constituted a barbaric act because it prevented enslaved peoples from entering the Christian Heaven (Barrett 1995; Ganaah 2016). These white peoples then gave themselves the role of savior by arguing that they could bring literacy to those kept in bondage. But many enslaved people were already literate in some form. For example, a pre-Civil War survey at a slave auction in Kentucky found that up to 20 percent of captives could read or write. Also, hundreds of written slave narratives have been published in the united states over the past two centuries.<sup>lxv</sup> Multiple scholars have also determined that enslaved people utilized writing to create communal bonds, develop modes of self-expression, form identities and personhood, and survive the terror of bondage (Cornelius 1991). Furthermore, for many enslaved peoples, these acts of literacy, especially writing, was

considered a physical skill because learning and performing these actions demanded resourcefulness for the times, materials, and spaces to create (Hager 2013). And when enslaved peoples were caught breaking laws or customs surrounding writing (and literacy) prohibitions, the ramifications could include bodily punishments (including lashings, whippings, limb removals, rape, and more), kinship disruptions (stealing children, selling the ‘offender,’ breaking marriages), material restrictions, and other forms of torture or murder. Writing was a central component in many enslaved people’s daily lives in some form or fashion.

At the DEF, while individuals do request pens and pencils, paper is the item that most captives continuously ask for arguing that it is the hardest item to obtain in the prison. One man joked that “it’s easier to get drugs in here than paper.” Because paper is a material that can slide under doors or in-between cracks in the walls, the material escapes the rigid mobility controls that administrators enact. Men and women spend hours shuffling paper from their cells to their neighbors by slowly moving the item through a pulley system using string and paper clips. In these moments, they tie the paper with string and weight the string a paper clip, creating a kite to slide across concrete floors. Others walk past fences, reach into their pants, and slip paper to each other. Some people give paper to COs and ask them to pass the item along to a specific person. In many cases, correctional officers oblige advising that it “was only paper.” Once captives had their paper, they then had to find times to write that would not interfere with their daily movement schedules. Because most incarcerated people at the DEF do not rely upon traditional time measuring instruments (like clocks) and instead feel time through their movement schedule – such as tier and rec time, chow, medical, and visits – paper, time, and mobility become linked through acts of writing. Like many enslaved peoples in the united states



before them, DEF captives demonstrate a resourcefulness for the time, spaces, and materials to create.

This physical skill also serves as an act of individualization for some people because many assert that attaining these writing materials demonstrate their inherent personal abilities or carefully crafted practices. I observed nine men bragging with other captives about how they were able to take paper from a room in the education department, charm a worker into giving them paper, and pass paper to others without staff noticing. In these conversations, they would boast how they moved too fast for staff to notice, used mellifluous tones and charming words to get paper out of workers, and used sleight of hand strategies. When bragging, these individuals would tell their stories with vivid details, often sharing how they developed these skills throughout their life. With the details of their paper gathering skills, captives included small descriptions of their personal histories before they became imprisoned. There were individuals who said they practiced magic as children and young adults to help them “move quicker than the eye,” developed abilities to “sweet-talk” people who were gullible by “getting out of work” they didn’t want to do at home, and learned how to gather materials quickly through “criminal” activities. People who asserted their natural propensity to obtain writing materials often provided anecdotes about how their skills were utilized in their daily lives outside the prison. These participants argued that they were born with these abilities and that their skills could not be taught. In telling their stories, many men and women crafted contextualized life histories that centered their personal narratives. These stories, and the ability to garner an audience, provided captives with narratives that individualized their lives and challenged the decontextualization of State paper practices.

When speaking about time, many captives explained that time has different meanings to people depending on length of sentences and familial bonds and that writing helped change temporality. Individuals given decades and life sentences often advised that time meant nothing to them because they felt like they were never getting out of prison. These men and women described writing as an act that made clear “how ridiculous long sentences are” because when you give someone that much time, they’re going to “change what time means.” Mr. Matos, a Mexican-American man given two life sentences, explains:

Time don’t mean nothing when they lock you up as long as they done me. I’ve been down for 19 years and I can’t even tell you what that means anymore...I do things to get me through. I write a lot because it’s something they can’t take away. I write to my family and sometimes to women through pen pal stuff...But when I write, I don’t really worry about nothing too hard. I take that paper and put down everything that needs to be said. As long as I keep doing that, they can’t keep me locked down forever, because forever don’t mean shit anymore. That only means something to them.

Other people with less than life sentences, usually between three and 15 years, told me that time can still feel punitive, but that it can also be reconfigured to help people survive incarceration.

Like Mr. Matos, Mr. Watkins offered that penal time means something different to prison administrators and “inmates (new arrivals)” who haven’t learned how to live in prison yet. When asked, he expanded:

You have to know what you need. I like to get my paper in order so I can get done what I need to do...I usually write poetry a lot between meals. I also write letters to my wife and kids, but I like to do that when it starts to get dark. It feels good to write about what I’ve been doing or stories about where I’m from...It’s like I’m not an animal being caged like a fucking dog. I’m still a human being even though they want me dead...I feel bad for the young ones that are just walking in cuz it’s gonna take them a long time to understand what it really means to be locked down while time keeps passing. I don’t have to worry about that anymore.

In these statements, both men describe how writing changes what penal time feels like for them.

Mr. Matos explains that his long sentences seem ludicrous because his temporality differs greatly

from his captors'. Writing with non-bureaucratic paper allows him to utilize the materials around him to control time and mobility. As long as he has paper, he can control what State punishment feels like. Mr. Watkins goes even further. He explains that people who haven't been incarcerated for long periods feel time passing, as if it is a natural thing that has the ability to move even though captives remain locked in their cell. When Mr. Watkins writes his poetry and letters, time doesn't move in the same way rendering it pointless in terms of punishment. He explains that he writes stories about his life and his everyday activities. In doing so, he upends the narratives of precision that turns him into decontextualized, abstract crime, and instead, uses paper to re-write his narrative. He takes control over the stories about him to exert power over time and mobility. He cannot be fully locked down because penal time and rigid movement regulations do not create the same punishing feelings that many others feel on a daily basis.

Writing on paper destroys time itself because most of the men and women do not write in a linear fashion. The poetry, letters, and stories they create can be about anything and anyone. While their creations usually center on themselves and their families, I rarely observed people writing in a teleological manner that had specific temporal origin and ending points. Some would write "whatever popped into my head," "anything that I'm feeling in the moment," and about "my family and friends." These actions served to construct a new temporality that stopped time from moving, preventing further punishment as the years passed for the rest of us. And because mobility and animacy are tightly linked at the DEF, they assert their aliveness through controlling movement. Unlike the unsettling mobilities of walls, floors, and bureaucratic papers, temporality stops moving, allowing these men and women to creatively upend State punishment through bodily movements on small pieces of paper. Time doesn't slow down for these individuals like it does for the men we met in chapter two. It ceases to exist because it ceases to

move. The physical skill of writing provides many people with the means to upend naturalized hierarchies and create worlds where they are very much alive.

These particular writing actions also serve to construct each person as an individual. Almost every captive complained to me about how prison administrators treat them like a collective – things without any individualizing histories or feelings. I observed dozens of conversations about how workers don't think of them as individuals and watched heated arguments between staff and captives about how "convicts ain't all the same." Being an individual was something that many captives feel they lacked because often when one person got into trouble, punishing movement restrictions were overlaid onto everyone, making people and materials harder to access. If someone punched a CO, all people in the unit were placed on lockdown. If some act of violence happened in the 2 Units, then the 4 Units could quite possibly be affected by new regulations that administrators claimed would make the compound safer. And, once again, because mobility and animacy are tightly linked, these punishments collectively forced many captives to question their sense of aliveness. But most people write by themselves in their cells, and they create narratives about their personal lives and those with whom they are bonded. While obtaining writing materials was viewed as a skilled social act, it is still a process of achieving an individual skill, and the act of writing was almost always done on one's own. This practice serves as an individualizing process for captives who are often treated as one big group. And because they write about their life stories and center themselves and their friends and families in their poetry, writing with paper recreates each person as their own individual with specific relationships and feelings. It is an act of contextualization that centers the creator in their narratives. Where narratives of precision are about collectivizing, captive writing individualizes. This is where writing with paper and creating *paños* intersect: acts of

creation serve as an individualizing process. To create, whether it be on paper or cloth, is to manifest the individual and to be seen in the manners that you can, in some sense, control. In these creative moments, incarcerated people assert power over their stories and their bodies by becoming an individual who controls time and mobility. They become alive through their personal movement, and that of their materials, bringing the possibility of becoming an individual. To be mobile, then, is to center an individual that has the power to control narratives, time, animacy, and Human.

### **Becoming Human**

Throughout this chapter, I demonstrated that captives are deeply concerned with the Human status. Incarcerated people constantly speak to each other about what it means to be Human, they argue with COs about access to material and social relations which they equate with Human, and they wield materials and violence to become Human. In prison, Human is not an automatic status, nor is it something that individuals can always attain on their own. At the Desert Echo Facility, becoming Human requires diverse processes that intertwine mobility with violence, gender and sexuality, materiality, acts of creation, and domination. Human manifests through continual actions that constitute the category, often to the detriment of beings considered inferior. Many captives feel that they are perceived and treated as non-human precisely because they are locked down in prisons where social and material relations remain heavily restricted. These oppressive regulations create unsettling mobilities where supposedly inanimate things seemingly come to life when they begin to move in some form or fashion. Because these captives directly link movement with their sense of aliveness, they feel themselves sliding down animacy hierarchies. Making matters worse, many COs imagine incarcerated people as dead-like things and they use taphonomic processes to solidify this perception. Administrators, and some

fellow captives, decontextualize lives through acts of violence, turning specific Others into abstract crime and papered peoples. Throughout this dissertation, I demonstrated that most captives also witness staff demonstrating more concern about the well-being of animals than the suffering they endure – such as COs caring for a dying bird while incarcerated people suffer and the worry that dogs on the compound suffer because they remain locked in cells where men and women live every day. It's no wonder that a large number of DEF people feel the need to become Human when held in bondage.

To become Human for many DEF captives is to control mobility. When writing, incarcerated people take control over their narratives in order to create individuals who cannot be locked down. They radically alter temporality to take control over how they feel their punishment. They utilize paper because it is an item that they can move between fences, gates, and concrete walls – actions that allow them to take control over the materials that confine them and a power that can diminish unsettling mobilities. In rewriting their narratives and through acts of creation, they take control over COs, prison administrators, and even other captives by marking themselves as individuals whose movements cannot be fully regulated. When they create artworks out of sugar, cloth, and water, and then share these items with an audience, they demand to be seen. When ripping up bureaucratic paper, they take the control of performing violence against those that torture them. When captives pass along hygiene materials, they create the ability to feel movement, generating their sense of aliveness and Human and the possibility of control. And when men and women beat, torture, and kill those labelled non-human, they take control over the Human category by restricting movement and performing violence and domination. Movements make the Human when the Human is in charge of mobility. This idealized being cannot be fully defined by captors or coerced into living as State approved

Objects, or so the story goes. Mobility is all about power. To become Human is to exert that power and, to some extent, control it.

## Conclusion

Mr. Allego leaned against the fence and waited for the familiar mechanic buzz that signaled approval for entrance. The sun heated the metal to the point that I couldn't touch it with my bare hands, but Mr. Allego leaned against it without concern. Topped with barbed wire, the fence opened to a narrow passage approximately the size of a prison cell that stopped abruptly at a two-story prison unit where 48 people lived in three separate rooms. A metal, mechanized door would need to be opened by correctional officers sitting inside on the second story where they overlooked the prison unit and its surrounding areas. But for now, we waited at the fence until the officers allowed us to enter, and Mr. Allego was becoming increasingly irritated by my lack of understanding. I was having trouble paying attention to his words because we stood in the Southwestern sun with sweat dripping down our faces. If the correctional officers would only let us inside the fenced area, we could wait at the metal door where the prison unit could shade us. I thought of cool breezes and wished for cold water filled with ice. But there was no ice here. This prison did not provide that item for every day usage because the material offering might lead to further requests from people who are disappeared to these concrete buildings in the middle of the desert. After all, if you give a mouse a cookie...

“Are you listening to me?” Mr. Allego demanded with a stern shout. I confessed that my mind had drifted because I was so hot. Through apologies I told him that I was not used to this dry heat yet because I had moved to the area from a tropical climate. He laughed and told me that I better get used to it quick because no one would want to speak with me if I stopped listening every time I felt some discomfort. “Besides, you gotta make sure they don't see you sweat (referring to the invisible correctional officers in the prison unit), even if you sweatin” he said with a grin. “Is that why you're leaning against that hot-ass fence?” I asked him. “Nah, I'm just



tired. But if they think this hot fence and this waiting doesn't bother me, then maybe I am hanging on this fence to show them something." He turned away and looked at the prison unit and didn't speak for a few moments.

Mr. Allego came to this prison 15 years ago, carrying a life sentence that weighed heavily on him, though he tried not to show it. At the age of 22 he murdered the ex-boyfriend of his then girlfriend and was taken into police custody with an unregistered gun and marijuana in his possession. His sentence was lengthened by the drugs in his pocket because of the 1994 Crime bill passed by the republican congress and signed into law by president bill clinton. He often joked about how he doesn't know what got him more time: the murder or the bags of weed in his coat pockets. The one thing he knows for certain is that prosecutors and defense attorneys both believed he was involved in gang activity – something he vehemently denies. His brown skin, Chicano accent, the violence, and the drugs assured the judge, attorneys, and most of his family that he must be involved with gang activity. Now, he is 38 years old with an adult child whom he barely knows and who rarely visits. In fact, none of his family visits him on a regular basis because it is too expensive to commute hours away from their homes, they cannot make it through prison security clearances, it is too painful to see him locked in cages, or a litany of other reasons.

"Are you ready to finish what we were talking about?" he asked as he turned back to face me. I nodded, and told him that many people spoke about feeling less Human or not Human at all when held captive in this prison and that I didn't quite understand what Human meant. His face contorted – almond eyes narrowed, full cheeks raised, and thick lips pulled tight – and he moved away from the fence towards a patch of brown, dusty earth between the concrete walkways covering the prison grounds. He pointed to the dirt and told me that humans leave footprints and

that I leave footprints everywhere I go. He advised that these footprints provide proof that humans were here and other humans can see their remnants long after moving to another location. Getting the sense that he believed he could not leave footprints, I moved away from the concrete and toward his thin tattooed covered body. “But you leave footprints in this dirt even if the wind blows them away, don’t you?” I asked. “You’re not listening to me” he said with frustration and motioned towards a large stinkbug on the concrete a few inches in front of his shoe. Before I or the stinkbug could move, he lifted his foot and stomped the bug into the concrete. Shocked, I backed a few steps away before I realized what I was doing and forced myself to stop moving. He looked at my surprised and judging face for a moment before looking back at the smashed creature in front of us. “That’s a footprint” he said. As if knowing our moment had ended, the mechanized fence buzzed and Mr. Allego ran to open it, moving through the narrow passageway before disappearing into the prison door.

Six weeks after Mr. Allego smashed the stinkbug we once again, found ourselves waiting for the mechanized fence to open in front of his unit. We were joking about a CO neither one of us liked because I was publicly scolded earlier in the day for my mohawk-style haircut. “Your hair is crazy though” Mr. Allego informed me. “You might wanna take care of that before it really gets you into trouble.” I told him that I wasn’t going to cut my hair because I really liked this style, even though the truth was that I used my hair to distinguish myself from prison staff. He scoffed and looked down at the concrete when suddenly the metal fence buzzed. I held the fence open for him but did not enter because I was not yet given permission to be in this particular unit by myself. “You remember that bug?” he asked me. “Yeah,” I said. The metal unit door buzzed open, signaling that our conversation was supposed to be over. “Did you think about what I said? He asked. After I nodded and said that I had thought about the interaction numerous

times, he smiled and moved towards the unit door. As I shut the fence, locking him inside the narrow passageway, I shouted “Is closing this fence on you a footprint?” He smiled and moved into the unit offering “Look who’s finally listening.”

### **Paying Attention**

Incarcerated people constantly spoke to me about how prison administrators denied their Human status. Most days, random men and women would approach me in units or when walking across the compound to complain that they were treated worse than animals or how they worried that the larger public wished they could be exterminated like insects. In these moments, captives would often peer into the desert, clench their jaw, look at me with glassy eyes, or curse in the wind. These individuals also reminded me that I could never fully understand what it meant to be excluded from Human in this manner because I had never been imprisoned. Making the mistake of ignoring the importance of these concerns, I often spoke about being brown, queer, Chicano, Indigenous. Believing I contributed wonderful words that were important for them to listen to, I was often met with blank stares, open mockery, or anger. And then Mr. Allego stepped on that poor bug and scared me into silence. He told me I wasn’t listening, and for that matter, I wasn’t really trying to understand anything about living on the compound. I was reminded of Mr. Ruiz’ words from chapter two: “Come back here when you really paying attention.”

Once I began “paying attention,” my focus shifted from a preconceived idea of what constituted Human, and instead, attempted to find out what being Human meant at the Desert Echo Facility. I had already begun noting movement patterns, sensory practices, important shared materials, and correctional policies and activities that constructed affective threat, but centering what it meant to be Human proved the hardest thing to do. Human was clearly defined for me. Try as I might, I returned time and again to rights-based notions, evolutionist

perspectives, and euro-american dogma of the Human. Still, I kept finding myself waiting at fences with multiple people who would ask me questions about my research and try to redirect my pursuits. And Mr. Allego's footprints bothered me to no end. That damn stomped bug ruined many days because I could not stop staring at dead insect and animal bodies all over the facility grounds. In fact, I spent a few weeks counting the squashed bugs on the compound on any given day only to realize that I could never prove who or what killed these creatures, how their deaths occurred, and why each being died at its current location. Mr. Allego noticed my frustrations and laughingly told me that I was "fucked up" because I was running all over the compound paying more attention to dead bugs than live humans. When I complained that he was the one that set me on this path, he laughed again and told me that he didn't mean for me to get so lost, advising that following physical footprints doesn't get anyone to their desired location.

Mr. Allego always frustrated me because he said shit like that all the time, especially when I was at my most confused states. He would pop in at the most random moments to drop some sagey-sounding words and then head towards his prison unit. What the hell did footprints have to do with Human? I thought about disability theory, posthumanism, and animal studies only to be troubled by the concept of a footprint. It seems so obvious now, but it took weeks, and mocking tones from numerous individuals, to figure out that a footprint did not demonstrate an object in the earth, but the actions of an alive being who has the power to control, kill, and disappear. It was this realization that led me to ask Mr. Allego if closing him inside a locked space constituted a "footprint." Days after he answered this question, he laughed at me for taking the word footprint so literally instead of just being more open to questioning my beliefs. That dagger to my soul – after all, some of the first concepts students learn in any introductory anthropology course are the tools of cultural relativism and the problems with ethnocentrism –

caused him unadulterated glee, much to my dismay. But his continual teachings, alongside the actions of multiple other people, opened worlds where to become Human was a process that coupled mobility with violence, materiality, and acts of creation.

At the Desert Echo Facility, Human is not a given or natural being, but rather, continual actions that constitute the category, often to the detriment of supposedly inferior creatures and things. Many captives feel that they are perceived and treated as non-human precisely because they are locked down in prisons where social and material relations remain heavily restricted. These oppressive regulations create unsettling mobilities where supposedly inanimate things seemingly come to life when they begin to move in some form or fashion. Because these individuals directly link physical movement with their sense of aliveness, they feel themselves sliding down animacy hierarchies. Making matters worse, many COs imagine incarcerated people as dead-like things and use taphonomic processes to solidify this perception. Administrators and captives also decontextualize incarcerated people's lives through acts of violence, turning specific Others into abstract crime and papered peoples. Most captives also witness staff demonstrating more concern about the well-being of animals than the suffering they endure – such as COs caring for a dying bird while those under their control contend with the ambiguity of their aliveness and Human status and captor's concerns about dogs on the compound remaining locked in cells where individuals live every day. It's no wonder that a large number of DEF people feel the need to become Human when held in bondage.

In chapter two, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Ramirez, and Mr. Johnson, and the rest of their cohort, all contended with unsettling mobilities that forced them to question how alive they were because 'inanimate objects' were able to move in ways that captives, locked in small cells, could not. Their animacy hierarchies were disrupted and their Subject/Object distinctions became

murky. The borders between alive/not-alive and Subject/Object became even more hazy as State paper practices decontextualized peoples' lives, turning them into mere abstractions and things that needed to be locked down for safety reasons. As these participants felt the rocking of floors, pulsing of walls, and vibrations of bureaucratic paper, they began to question what it meant to be Human, and how Human and non-human should be treated. Concerned that they fell into the latter category because they link movement to both aliveness and Human, these men and women utilized mobility to secure the Human for themselves.

Creating the Human through mobility is nothing new. In chapters three and four, I demonstrated how movement is central to constructing the gendered Human and how enslavement mobility controls and incarceration often determine who gets labelled Human and who does not. white peoples have historically utilized mobility to control enslaved Africans, and their future kin, through legal apparatuses, paper passes, beatings, murder, and torture. They also attempted to remove enslaved peoples from constructed communities and imagined afterlives, ignoring their captive's abilities to create radically different ways of relating to each other, their spirits, and their environments. Previous and contemporary State police forces weaponized physical movement restrictions as they patrolled, ghettoized, and murdered darker-skinned peoples. euro-american men have historically controlled women's' movements through patriarchal assumptions and outright gendered violence. These men often sought to control how women moved throughout society, restricted their material resources, and attempted to penetrate their imaginations with dreams of the status quo. COs have taken up many of these historical assumptions about the necessity to control captive's movements, and many DEF men assume that they naturally need unrestricted movement whereas women's movement needs to be controlled by men. Numerous DEF correctional officers also utilize crime talk to emphasize just

how non-human their captives are and to justify further punishing movement restrictions. These mobility practices craft Human through violent tactics that literally police the category. In these contexts, mobility and Human cannot be disentangled.

Many COs and captives at the DEF clearly understand this entanglement, leading them to find new ways to control animacy and movement or to feel mobile even though they remain locked in their prison cells. In chapter five, I demonstrated that correctional officers utilize taphonomic process through talking about the rotting smells of captives to imagine incarcerated people as dead-like things and through harshly controlling physical movement. Through these actions, many staff immobilize those under their control as a means to manage animacy hierarchies and mark themselves distinct from incarcerated people. I also showed that many people utilize the bodily sense of smell to generate feelings of movement through the usage and sharing of hygiene materials. These individuals pass along soaps, shampoos, deodorant, and toothpastes, leaving atomized pieces of themselves with each material. As their smell moved throughout the compound, so did these captives, and they created the feelings of movement necessary to feel both alive and Human. But they also only share these materials, and the feelings they generate, with other beings they consider Human and actively prevent certain peoples, such as sex offenders, from participating in their communal actions. They use these small materials to create powerful movements that upend naturalized hierarchies and situate themselves as a Human *living* through captivity, often to the detriment of Others. Numerous people utilize paper to create written works as a means to produce their own stories and construct narratives that don't just fill-in the blanks missing from State forms, but rather, completely rewrite who the State says they are. They share, pass along, hide, and manipulate paper to find ways to control how time feels and to redefine what it means to be alive and Human. Through their writings,

they create individual stories that do not follow linear timescapes, producing new temporalities that constructs time as something that does not move. Because it does not move, time is, therefore, nonexistent. Like many enslaved peoples before them, writing and paper has multiple meanings: it disciplines, rejuvenates, creates, and destroys depending on who and what is in motion. To be Human, in these circumstances, is to feel, or not feel, the power of generative movements that an individual can control.

For many captives, mobility also requires violence and domination in order to construct the Human. Mr. Allego opens this chapter describing how Human leaves footprints – actions that destroy, kill, and control, something he shares in common with Mr. Thomas’ desire to kill the bird he sees in chapter two. But leaving footprints also intertwines other naturalized systems, such as gender and sexuality, in ways that often lead to many DEF captive’s personal detriment, something they share in common with their captors. For these individuals, becoming Human means that something else must be rendered non-Human, specifically Chesters. These individuals adhere to a linear temporality replete with origin stories and futures lost, often wrapped with sexist and misogynistic coatings. Chesters remove the possibility for boys to become Man, a being who controls and dominates, and they steal girls’ purity, an object that belongs to Man. Becoming Human means that Chesters’ movements, as non-humans, needs to be restricted and controlled by those with the power of Human – read Man. They determine that beings who disrupt naturalized gender and sexual assumptions need to be beaten, banished, killed. Their personal Human status only exists because someone, or something, else is lacking the very qualities they claim to possess. When these captives participate in this violence, they actually perform actions similar to the violence carried out against them by those who lock the fences, close the doors, refuse touch, and imagine them as dead-like things.



## **Feeling Seen**

But most DEF captives also demonstrated another major concern, one that remains a central component to American incarceration: being disappeared into penal compounds often hundreds, if not thousands, of miles away from their homelands. Incarcerated people are held in bondage by a State birthed through the genocide of Indigenous peoples and the enslavement of African peoples. Euro-Americans, and those who identify or wish to be them, lock people inside small cells and often pretend their captives no longer exist, if they ever truly existed in the first place. Through these actions, the American State attempts to create and manage a world for white, male individuals and those like them; beings that have mastery over their Human selves, other non-humans, and all lands. In this fantasy, they are Subjects that reign supreme over the less alive objects around them, and they show their power in controlling mobility and exterminating the things hierarchically situated beneath them. Incarceration remains a key component in attempting to conjure this Euro-American dream world – a world where millions of people must be banished in order to pretend that their constructed hierarchies are divine acts.

Many DEF captives understand that the State is built upon their disappearance and their invisibility. Their desire to be seen, as ocularcentric as it may seem, stems from a need to be acknowledged as alive and Human. They have been uprooted from their communities, forced to contend with State policies and practices that decontextualize their existence, and rendered invisible from the larger American public. Many correctional officers also feel coerced into labor that they feel marks them as social outcasts and undesirables. It's completely understandable that so many people and COs turn to European enlightenment ideologies, often riddled with bigoted assumptions, to establish their alive and Human status or to produce their distinction from less-than Others. But turning towards these 'enlightened' paths often leads to relational dead ends and

spiritual sinkholes. Like prisons, many european and euro-american assumptions about what counts as alive and Human are inherently oppressive and exclusionary. After all, many of the founding fathers, and their supportive partners and children, espoused notions of hierarchical freedom at the exact moment they enslaved millions around the globe (Buck-Morss 2000; Fanon 1963 [2005]). It takes true ignorance to speak of freedom while simultaneously forcing people into bondage. And because ignorance is a form of knowledge production, these racist and heterosexist ways of thinking have generated forms of punishment that would make too many euro-american ancestors shake with pride. american settlers and their colonizing offspring have created new ways to disappear, destroy, and murder; processes that their rotting ancestors could only dream of. And these ideas and practices have seeped so deep into the american earth that many of the colonized and dispossessed have naturalized the supposed truths about how worlds are supposed to feel. The actions of many DEF captives and correctional officers exemplify this reality.

But there are DEF incarcerated people and workers who dream new realities even as they live with american corrections systems. Many of them generate feelings of movement, and therefore their alive and Human status, through small materials and personal creations that link their bodily senses with communal formations. Some COs create relationships with their captives even though that are not supposed to and may not even want to. These actions are not about seeking agency or resistance in the static scholarly sense, but rather, demonstrate how people often create new feelings in order to produce the worlds they desire. Sharing scented hygiene products and writing temporality is less about ideologically upending oppressive structures and more focused on how someone wants to live and how they want to be treated. When state

captives and COs insist on being seen, they ask for readers to imagine their worlds, their joys, and their pain. In other words, they ask that you sense their incarcerated existence.

### **Recommendations**

After presenting an early version of chapter two at a conference in Toronto, I was asked by an audience member what I specifically think should be changed at the DEF. She asserted that it's easy to point out problems but that I should provide answers as to how to fix the issues I write about. I was a bit angered by her assertions because it was not easy for me to do this research. Also, having a white-appearing person lecture me as to how I, an Indigenous/Chicano person of color, need to provide solutions to oppression created by her ancestors seemed to be a request of sheer arrogance. But she wasn't totally wrong either. There should be an expectation that I follow-up with actionable changes that could and should be instituted at the Desert Echo Facility. Here are some recommendations from participants:

### **Captive's Requests**

- End the level system at the prison and return to open movement. This requires tearing down the fences that were added after 2001 and removing the barbed wire and electric fencing around the perimeter. This would allow incarcerated people and workers to interact with each other without assumptions that they are inherently dangerous. This action would also provide the movement that many associate with feeling alive and Human. This is not an unreasonable request because this was how the prison operated prior to March 2001.
- Provide access to materials similar to how private prisons operate throughout the State. At private prisons, many people are able to obtain a variety of foods, artistic supplies, educational materials, hygiene products, and different types of clothing. Many argue that this would ease a lot of the tension that exists on the compound.
- End contracts with private companies who make money off of incarcerating people throughout the country. These companies provide shoddy materials that many captives cannot keep long-term, and so, they must continuously buy supplies at a high mark-up cost. Many argue that ending these contracts would prove that corrections should remain a public concern instead of a privatized money grab.
- Provide universal healthcare for all captives and workers by having medical staff on-site that anyone can utilize. Medical care on the DEF can only be described as abysmal. Many people believe that if workers and captives have a unified healthcare plan on the

compound, then everyone would benefit from increased access to medical coverage that actually helps all people at the DEF.

- Offer more educational and vocational programming. With the increasingly austere budget cuts to corrections in the State, incarcerated people are finding their educational opportunities dwindling. Many individuals argue that terminating expensive contracts with private companies would allow for a better use of the funds. Reallocating funds from private corporations to public prisons departments would provide enough money to increase educational programming on the compound. These individuals also usually argued that they should be given access to government financial aid for higher education and vocational training. This would require changing federal law that prevents people from receiving public funds while imprisoned (and sometimes long after prison). This law was approved by a republican congress and signed into law by president bill clinton. Most of these captives also stated that correctional staff should have access to the educational programming as well. They argue that this will build respectful relationships between staff and incarcerated people while providing much needed educational services for workers.
- Allow visits every day of the week. Families and friends can only visit on certain days (depending upon a person's security level) and for only a short period of time (usually an hour or two). A number of people assert that increasing visitation would ensure kinship and communal relationships are not completely severed. They also believe that ending the security level system would completely change the visitation schedule anyway.
- Retrain all correctional staff with a focus on de-escalating potentially violent situations. Most trainings at the DEF, and even at the training academy, center on the potential violence that incarcerated people could enact. Instead, many captives argue that trainings should follow what they have seen on television programs about prison in Norway, Sweden, and Germany. In many of these countries, correctional officers have to undergo extensive trainings before being employed in the prison, including how to interact with captives in respectful manners and without fear, and to assist incarcerated people with their everyday duties and responsibilities. These individuals usually assert that providing continuing educational programming for captives and COs on the compound would reduce fear, create healthy relationships, and reduce recidivism and prison violence. At the bare minimum, many people would like to be invited to the training seminars to speak with incoming staff so as they can provide their perspective about life at the DEF.
- Allow captives to write their own histories on prison documents. Some people believe that this would stop paper from vibrating and provide context for their pervious and current actions.
- Don't watch prison reality television programs. These shows never provide the full context of what it feels like to be imprisoned and usually focus on extraordinary events in prisons rather than everyday life.
- Write to incarcerated people. Many captives do not have relationships with anyone outside the prison. One letter can alleviate so much pain.
- Join with activist organizations in your local communities to work toward bail reform and to decrease punitive sentences Elect prosecutors who demonstrate concern for their community and not just career ambition.

### **Correctional Officer Requests**

- Increase pay to a living wage. Almost every CO spoke about how little they were paid. In fact, many people seek out second jobs or sign up for multiple shifts of overtime in an effort to increase their income. The starting pay for a CO in 2016 averaged around \$33,000 annually. Many argued that a pay increase would reduce CO stress and demonstrate their importance on the compound.
- Access to cheaper and better health care. Many officers spoke about how their health care didn't provide enough coverage. Because many believe that their work breaks down their body, they want adequate healthcare to deal with the consequences of their labor.
- A large number of COs want access to higher education and often become angry when incarcerated people enroll in long-distance learning college courses. They feel that if they had access to higher education for free, or at very low costs, they could be better COs or find other employment.
- Many COs want to remove the fences from the compound arguing that the locked fences make them feel as if they are imprisoned as well. These officers often want to keep the security levels though.
- Some female COs would like male officers to undergo anti-sexist training. These individuals all asserted that men on the compound do not respect women and that they hold archaic beliefs about gender. They also believe that the sexism of their peers puts their lives in danger.
- Numerous COs also asked to change policies about bringing in cell phones, newspapers, and magazines. They argue that they don't always watch for danger because they listen for trouble and can often feel when something is about to go wrong. They argue that they will be more alert if they didn't feel so isolated in the prison. They also worry that their families cannot contact them directly. This causes undue stress and many COs assert that it takes away the focus they need for their job.
- Some officers wanted to be involved in training other staff members to provide in-depth knowledge about the importance of their job. They want the opportunity to explain why they follow certain policies and even openly wondered if non-security workers need to shadow COs before they can start their work positions.
- A large number of COs asked that administrators stop relying on paper forms and move towards electronic data record-keeping practices. These officers stated that filling out paperwork ate up a large amount of their day and that "going electronic" would make it easier to keep records, track trends, and save time. For this to happen, new computers would need to be installed in all security centers equipped with internet access.

### **Cruelty is the Point**

In October 2018, Adam Serwer published an article in *The Atlantic* about bigoted supporters of Donald Trump. In the piece, he asserts that cruel acts often bring great pleasure to individuals bound together by white supremacy and misogyny, and he wonders if there is something inherently cruel about the creature called Human. The common denominator, he

argues, seems to be the extent to which many individuals want those “not like them” to feel anguish and suffer for their naturalized differences. Imagine my irritation when a white, female correctional officer in Florida, responding to a local reporter asking about the government shutdown of 2018-2019 and upset that she wasn’t getting paid, declared that donald trump was elected to care about people like her and that he was “hurting the wrong kind of people.”

While I understand Serwer’s pessimistic argument about the linkage between Human and cruelty, this dissertation has presented more complex versions of Human. I have demonstrated that there a number of ways DEF incarcerated people become Human – whether through violence, generating feelings of movement, sharing scented hygiene products, producing and sharing artwork, and writing new forms of temporality. Cruelty is not always the point in being or becoming Human, but at the Desert Echo Facility, feelings of control often pair with the construction of Human. Controlling the movement of others, controlling access to social and material resources, and controlling animacy hierarchies are definitely process of becoming Human. But I’m positive that they’re not the only paths. I observed and analyzed a small portion of life at the DEF, not every possibility. Control seems to be the point if you ignore and foreclose on the infinite Human-making possibilities that I did not or could not observe.

But prisons do exist as shrines to white settlers and their imagined supremacy. While I don’t believe that Human and cruelty naturally go hand-in-hand, sometimes the structures built by specific versions of Human do interlink with cruel acts in unsettling ways. Colonizers constructed prisons to disappear and decimate the original inhabitants of what came to be known as the united states and they honed their predatory and punitive skills through the enslavement of African peoples. One of the reasons they performed this brutality was to create a dream world for an ideal creature they called Human. For the past four hundred years, white settlers, whom I refer

to as euro-americans, on the whole, have demonstrated a propensity to create cruel structures and then pretend they are natural formations. white supremacy, toxic masculinity, and capitalism (to name just a few) produced, and continues to produce, the prison-industrial complex, making clear that incarceration exists because of euro-american ideals about what it means to be Human. The point remains that being or becoming Human is not always about cruelty, but the same cannot be said for the euro-american Human. This being seeks mastery over themselves, others, and lands. Many DEF correctional officers and captives adhere to this version of Human, much to my dismay and to their detriment. While there are countless ways of becoming Human, the euro-american Human, and those strongly influenced by this creature, wield violence in the worst possible ways.

But I am not suggesting an end to DEF captive's versions of Human. While some of their Human-making actions demonstrate clear linkages to devastating histories, incarcerated people shouldn't be the ones to bear the hardships in challenging hundreds of years of oppressive prison practices. Becoming Human is one way that individuals stolen from their homelands and removed from their everyday kinship relations survive, whether imprisoned or not. More than that, becoming Human often builds community in places designed to divide and destroy. Even though the category is often generated through acts of exclusion, it is not my place, nor any person's place, to tell people held in bondage how to create worlds where they can live as more than just State captives. Besides, there are better places to start. euro-americans should be the first group to challenge their archaic assumptions and work to create different worlds that do not emphasize the hierarchies and bigoted beliefs upon which incarceration in america relies. But they have proven, time and again, that they'd rather ignore the devastation their privileged actions cause. Instead, so many of them focus energy on trying to prove their imagined

Indigenous roots, scream about how Black peoples shouldn't kneel during a war-mongering national anthem, dream of scarring the earth with walls and imaginary lines in the sand, and imagine themselves at the apex of something called civilization. They should do the work of changing the violent structures they created or benefit from. But I'm not holding my breath. Instead, it's on the rest of us to build worlds not based upon euro-american conceptions of Human and to challenge our own complicity in holding millions of people captive in the supposed land of the free.

While I included a number of changes that DEF incarcerated people and correctional officers requested in the previous section, prison abolition was noticeably absent from their list. Whenever I brought up the possibility of a world without prisons, every single incarcerated person and correctional officer explained that prisons remain an absolute necessity because they help maintain a safe society. I was not surprised by COs' inability to consider the possibility of prison abolition, but incarcerated people's perspectives unsettled me. Many captives argued that people "like them" don't belong in prison but that Chesters and other sex offenders should be held in bondage. These individuals usually claimed that prisons were places for non-human objects, not for Subjects who have attained, or should be treated as, Human. Others advised that people who commit crimes should still be sent to prison, but that sentence length should be capped at 20 years. Still, many others told me that prisons should exist as rehabilitative centers where State captives could be educated, make amends, and become better individuals. And finally, there was a small minority who believed that while prisons should be utilized for sex offenders, all other people convicted of criminal activities should be punished based upon the requests from aggrieved parties. Many people convicted of murder even claimed that they'd risk their victim's family demanding their death in order to create a fairer society. I don't know if



anyone would really follow through with this claim, but it's clear that no matter what legal system was dreamed up, prisons remain a fundamental component to most DEF captive's imagined society.

The fact that most DEF incarcerated people and correctional officers cannot imagine a world without prisons demonstrates how much more work must go into cultivating abolitionist movements. Prison abolition is not just about removing physical buildings or permanently opening cell doors. It means destroying cruel systems that plunder resources and allow abuse to continue unabated. Prison abolition requires a radical shift from the histories that allow mass incarceration to flourish, including euro-american conceptions of what counts as alive and Human. Too many DEF captives and correctional officers warned me that prisons are places for things that do not quite measure up to the status of Human. They tell stories of masculine beings that roam without restriction, shout demands for punishing controls that they direct towards inferior Others, and dream new worlds with old hierarchies. But these stories are nothing new. Our ancestors whisper how they were not allowed to be called Human as they were murdered, violently removed from homelands, and stolen into bureaucratic facilities. We hear these stories when bigots attempt to police our feelings as they punish improper physical movements and enforce rigid ideas about who deserves to be treated with disgust and disdain. And we hear these stories when we tell ourselves that we deserve the violence directed at us or try to pretend that we aren't hurt by the abusers in our lives. Prison abolition organizing has the potential to unsettle these old narratives because the work reshapes long-held stories and creates new social relations. DEF captives demonstrate that novel feelings can be created through the smallest materials and actions. Even if most DEF incarcerated people and COs currently adhere to euro-american conceptions of what it means to be alive and Human, it doesn't mean they do not show us new

paths. It's time for those of us who are not held as State captives to partner with incarcerated people and create worlds that they, nor we, have yet dared to imagine. At this point, dreams that maintain the status quo are just cruel.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> The ethnographic vignette that opens this chapter focuses on the murders of two people because these deaths radically altered the administrative policies and the everyday lives of captives and workers at the DEF. But still, this ‘event’ is an important historical moment that must be acknowledged and understood within the broader context of the dissertation arguments.

<sup>ii</sup> Manuela Cunha’s (2014) article provided much help when beginning to read new literatures about incarceration around the world. She created a document that describes recent trends in carceral studies while also making clear the dangers of ignoring historical inequities.

<sup>iv</sup> Confusingly, there are four levels, but because there is no fifth level, the highest is six.

<sup>v</sup> I utilize the regional terms united states and america because the scholarship I read often mentions locations within the imagined borders of this national conception. I do not deconstruct these notions because this has already been done in a far better way than I am capable (see Anderson 1982; Handler 1988; Watts 2015). However, it must be noted that though I utilize this term sparingly, I could have chosen different terminology, such as Turtle Island, but decided on the expedient term “united states.”

<sup>vi</sup> Incarcerated people at the DEF refer to themselves and many others as convicts. This term signifies someone who is currently imprisoned and is “doing their own time” (see Sykes 1958). This phrase specifically refers to a person who does not call attention to themselves due to excessive drug use, sexual overtures, and who doesn’t get overly agitated by correctional officers’ attitudes or actions. Only convicts at the DEF are allowed to refer to incarcerated people as convicts. The term “inmate” is considered State terminology by most incarcerated people, though captives often use this term for someone who allows correctional officers to agitate them, gets addicted to drugs, snitches, or breaks down as a result of not being able to “do their time.” I utilize the terms incarcerated people, incarcerated man/men, incarcerated woman/women, DEF captive(s), and simply men and women, in an attempt to respect the wishes of most people who asked me not to use “convict” or “inmate” when referring to them or their lives.

<sup>vii</sup> In *Travel as Metaphor*, Georges Van Den Abbeele wonderfully details how the metaphor of travel – moving from a ‘known’ place to an imagined “far off” destination – was often likened to an exploring and innovative mind. Rational thought was perceived of as a quest for enlightenment through a pedagogical voyage. Examples include Montaigne’s equestrian and Rousseau’s literate traveler.

<sup>viii</sup> I owe a great debt of thanks to Noel Salazar for providing literature about mobility. His work made this review possible and offered dozens of resources that I may not have found on my own. For these works, see Salazar 2011, 2012, 2013; Salazar and Smart 2011.

<sup>ix</sup> At the DEF, cell extraction is a term used when correctional officers (usually officers trained specifically for this type of force) physically accost an incarcerated person to remove them from their cell. Cell extractions can involve the use of Tasers, pepper sprays, gas bombs, rubber bullets, and officer’s body weight. Once COs violently extract their captive, they place them in Segregation for up to six months. The use of force against incarcerated people has been largely left up to State systems with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Whitley v. Albers* (1986) in favor of correctional force as long as it is conducted in “good faith.” *Hudson v. McMillian* (1992) upheld the right for correctional workers to cause “significant injury” to people’s bodies as long as this violence occurs in good-faith attempts to restore order. For more perspective, read Erica Goode’s (2014) piece about cell extractions in the *New York Times*.

<sup>x</sup> Tier Time is a common term in many Southwestern American prisons. It describes a scheduled time when people are allowed in a “common area.” This area consists of a space approximately 30x20 feet where people can watch a shared television set, use a microwave, play board games, speak with other men and women, and share food. A total of eight people is allowed out on tier time and it is heavily scheduled so that different “tiers” of incarcerated men do not cross paths. Most prison units incarcerate individuals from the same security level but they still keep tiers stratified so as not to have “too much movement.”

<sup>xi</sup> In his work on mobility, vibration, and materiality, David Bissell (2010: 485) asserts that vibrations are not effects of movement, but rather, have the capacity to generate movement that “blur[s] the illusory distinction between different materialities.” Beginning from the framework that vibrations are not simply cause-and-effect formations and attempting not to reinforce static distinctions between bodily materiality and everything else, the author explains that vibrations *generate* movements that denaturalize body/material divides. Using Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) idea that all that is left in life, and to study, is movement and vibration, Bissell notes the ways in which vibrating materials fold together, undermining bodies as auto-affective subjects because different materials become transmitters through vibrations, in turn, creating non-dialectical relationships. While he focuses on travel and bodily movements such as jiggles and swaying, Bissell essentially challenges materiality and mobility scholars to conceive of how sensorialities vibrate through different bodies, generating diverse movements and materialities in the process.

<sup>xii</sup> At the DEF, Indigenous peoples make up the second largest majority population after Latinx peoples. Overall in the United States, Indigenous peoples represent approximately 1 percent of all those incarcerated, including jails and prisons (Prison Policy

Initiative, 2016). In contrast, DEF Indigenous peoples make up approximately 10 percent of the total population, with Diné peoples accounting for almost 7 percent of that total.

<sup>xiii</sup> A Unit Manager's position is written in State policy as "A Corrections Administrator who is responsible for the oversight of operations at designated units within a facility. At facilities without a Classification Supervisor, the Unit Managers shall be responsible for the duties of the Classification Supervisor." This person oversees 96 people in one prison unit. This unit consists of two separate buildings consisting of six chambers where a total of 16 people reside in each chamber. The chambers have two separate tiers of 8 people each. Unit Managers also supervise all classification processes if there is no Classification Officer.

<sup>xiv</sup> DEF custody scores "constitute the assigned custody level unless an override has been requested in accordance with provisions contained" in the Classification Assessment document (DEF State Handbook). Once the initial score has been calculated, classification officers, unit managers, case workers, and programming coordinators are supposed to review incarcerated people's paper files and digitize records every three months to ensure proper security protocols are followed. In practice, reviews often take place weeks and sometimes months after the required timeline. Documentation required for custody scoring includes official criminal justice documents, disciplinary reports (if they exist), and paperwork for all classification categories and policies (see the explanation in text). Incarcerated people can be reclassified to a lower security level every six months, though they can be placed in higher security living at any time..

<sup>xv</sup> Besides Classification forms, incarcerated people must sign paperwork acknowledging they understand the DEF disciplinary system, the chain of command, and their responsibilities to keep their cells ordered according to correctional standards, as well as acknowledging the receipt of prison materials – such as clothing, hygiene products, and personal pictures and letters. These forms are then placed in a paper file, and sometimes digitized or noted in a State corrections database system, which then follow them to every prison they will then inhabit. These documents also become parole files if a person is released with a required parole sentence.

<sup>xvi</sup> While there are written DEF policies for mundane tasks, such as food schedules, tier time, and fraternizing between incarcerated people and staff, most correctional staff circumvent or bend rules when dealing with everyday problems. For example, some COs provide extra hygiene products (such as toilet paper, shampoo, and razors) to captives even though there is a specified limit for each item. Many COs explained that they bend some rules because it is easier than arguing with people about the "little things." Unfortunately, COs do not bend the same rules or bend them in the same ways, making it extremely difficult for DEF captives to negotiate correctional boundaries. This often leads to increased tension when write-ups for "little things" seem to come out of nowhere from an incarcerated person's perspective.

<sup>xvii</sup> Hannah Arendt's classic text *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963) focuses on the contradiction between Adolf Eichmann's monstrous acts, and his "average" appearance and banal bureaucratic language. After recounting his trial where Eichmann was charged with Crimes Against Humanity for his genocidal actions during World War II, she declares that despite his supposed "normalness," he lacked any moral responsibility, allowing him to justify atrocities in which he initiated and participated and to boast about horrific events that never occurred. Arendt was particularly interested in his lack of empathy and remorse for the hundreds of thousands of people he sent to death. Mr. Samson claim that there is an evilness about non-incarcerated people going about their day as if there is something completely "normal" about millions suffering incarceration is reminiscent of Arendt's claims. For Mr. Samson, the banality of evil continues around him unabated as non-incarcerated people exhibit empty emotional landscapes.

<sup>xviii</sup> Segregation, or SEG, is the highest security level at the DEF. At this level VI unit, people remain inside their cells, alone, for upwards of 23 hours every day. They may be allowed to go outside for one hour where they are alone inside a 10X10 foot cage. While living in SEG individuals have limited access to hygiene products, food items, and paper products for most of their duration. Most of the captives do not have televisions and are only allowed on book inside their cell. Though administrators are legally required to place people in lower security levels after 30 days, many remain inside SEF for six months or more. See Rhodes (2004) and Kerness and Lewey (2014) for more information on the devastating effects of living in SEG prison units.

<sup>xix</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDZiPY7XId4&feature=player\\_embedded&ga=2.156204283.1336022706.1542343963-1208285089.1542343962#%21](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDZiPY7XId4&feature=player_embedded&ga=2.156204283.1336022706.1542343963-1208285089.1542343962#%21)

<sup>xx</sup> A game known as Wall Ball where men and women use rubber balls and cement slabs to score points. This game has two teams with two players. One team serves the ball by throwing it against the cement wall and gains a point if the other team faults (fails to hit the ball or hits it out of bounds). Game rules differ depending on the captives playing, but most people play with these rules until one team reaches 15 points. This game only requires a ball, players, and a place to play.

<sup>xxii</sup> Fat or heavy woman

<sup>xxiii</sup> Sex offenders who rape or molest children

<sup>xxiv</sup> Enclosure practices, or dividing and bordering land through privatization initiatives, throughout European seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, wreaked havoc on marginalized peoples. Open fields had previously been used for agricultural production, animal husbandry, and for basic sustenance throughout Medieval Europe, most commonly in what came to be known as England. But capitalists argued that privatization was necessary for economic protections, an ordered society, and population control. In some cases, no reasons were given for enclosure, and instead, marginalized peoples found themselves negotiating and contesting privatization with little notice. In the "Modern Era," Garrett Hardin published *The Tragedy of the Commons* (1968) and argued that enclosure was necessary for resource management and population control, and to protect against the evils of human nature. This article became one of the most cited scientific publications excusing privatization methods and the authors' arguments bolstered punitive economic exploitation and privatization myths. Contemporary research

about enclosure has also demonstrated the practice's importance in identity formation (Marzec 2002), material and land resource access (Netz 2004), and ecological changes through forced internment (Chiang 2018). For more information, see Bravo and Demoor 2008; Demoor, Shaw-Taylor, Polanyi 1957, and Ward 2002; Dunbar-Ortiz 2014; and land magazine UK: <http://www.thelandmagazine.org.uk/articles/short-history-enclosure-britain>.

<sup>xxv</sup> Dozens of video recording cameras exist across the DEF compound. Depending on the unit, there can be anywhere between 4 and 10 cameras digitally recording the environment. Wardens, prison cops, and other high-level prison administrators can live-watch these cameras or observe the recorded data at a later date. Either way, all workers and captives know that they're every move can possible be recorded at any moment. This digital panopticon forces workers and captives to monitor their behavior, or at least hope that they "fly under the radar."

<sup>xxvi</sup> asshole

<sup>xxvii</sup> balls

<sup>xxviii</sup> Thin/Skinny girl

<sup>xxix</sup> Lorna A. Rhodes (2004) determined that people living in maximum-security prison cells develop an expanded sense of personal space as a result of their physical isolation.

<sup>xxx</sup> DEF correctional policies assert that unlawful touching of an incarcerated person can lead to disciplinary actions including termination. Unfortunately, lawful touching includes frisks for contraband, physical assault if workers believe they are in danger or if incarcerated people are not following orders, and if threats manifest during shakedowns or extractions. This vague policy allows for most touch to be considered lawful unless challenged by administrative staff. If any touching occurs outside of these parameters, most COs become specific about "too close" relationships, signally possible contraband or sexual activities.

<sup>xxxi</sup> girlfriend

<sup>xxxii</sup> There is Christian symbolism in the DEF "fall." The Christian fall occurred when Eve ate of the forbidden tree after being tricked by Satan. Eve then convinced Adam to eat of the tree, causing him to fall with her. This fall into disobedience removed innocence from the Christian God's creation forcing him to cast them out of his created paradise. This event is usually associated with the concept of original sin, or the idea that every human is born into sin and must receive grace from God or be sent to Hell, a place of perpetual torment. It is important to note that, in this story, it is a woman who causes the fall and even coerces a man to follow her lead. DEF workers speak in this religious language often equating falling with disobeying and entering into inappropriate relationships. They also scrutinize women more harshly than men because of their supposed natural inclination for causing trouble.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Mealtime

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Grace Kyungwon Hong (2011) demonstrates that incarceration is a strategy employed to contend with the excesses of late-capitalism. As market-driven exploitation ensnares peoples labeled minorities, unproductive, and Other, american elites utilize incarceration to manage the peoples left behind by so-called development. These practices simultaneously disappear whole populations that create undue burdens on capitalist societies and allow for economic elites to continue the lie that capitalism remains the most efficient way to regulate State systems. See Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) for further information as to how incarceration creates surplus geographies.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Quoted in Bermann (2011)

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Outside detail crews consist of incarcerate people who have clear conduct for six months. This mean they have not received paper write-ups from staff and have less than four years left on their sentence. Detail crew workers labor outside in extreme heat (up to 120 degrees) and cold (down to 10 degrees) for as little as 10-80 cents per hour. They clean the facility, till the fields, landscape, paint, and perform other maintenance duties.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> See Emile Durkheim (1893, 2014) and Max Weber (1930, 2002) to read foundational texts about division of labor and bureaucratic management.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Enacted by colonial british rule, this legislation was purported to be a protective measure for enslaved peoples. "Masters" were ordered to provide basic necessities (food, clothing, shelter), but it denied enslaved peoples british protections to the right to life and marked this collective as property that could be mutilated and beaten without legal or moral recourse. See Debe and Menard 2011, Handler 2016, and Rugemer 2018 for more information.

<sup>xxxix</sup> FBI uniform crime reporting continues today. FBI officials claim that aggregating and reporting data allows the agency to generate reliable information about how to properly police society. The agency's website also claims that these reports have produced indicative data that is used by scholars, police bureaucracies, and legislators. The reporting processes now include The National Incident-Based Reporting System, Hate Crime Statistics, Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted, The National Use-of-Force Data Collection, and a Crime Data Explorer. Because these databases influence media reporting about crime, how scholarship is produced about "criminal" people and activities, and how policing assignments and designations are produced, these reports disproportionately affect who is targeted for incarceration in the united states. And because these reports are produced within a racist, heterosexist settler State, darker-skinned, queer, and Indigenous peoples suffer the harshest consequences of FBI data gathering practices. See the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting website for more information. <https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr>

<sup>xl</sup> Though a few COs made off-hand comments about incarceration not being anything like slavery, when I broached the connection between enslavement and mass incarceration, every CO I worked with balked at the comparison and accused me of being provocative for the sake of angering workers.

<sup>xli</sup> Minstrel shows specifically centered on two racist examples of enslaved peoples in the united states: Jim Crow and Zip Coon. Whereas Jim Crow was supposed to depict enslaved plantation workers, Zip Coon was marketed as portraying enslaved city

laborers (often noted as a Dandy) who spoke, dressed, and acted in superior ways than Jim Crow enslaved peoples. All of these creations were racist manifestation of white fears, imaginings, and terror dreams where mostly white performers would dress in blackface, paint exaggerated red or white lips, and speak in what was called “broken English” while they sang and danced. These portrayals often depicted all Black peoples as imbecilic, lazy, highly sexualized, and ignorant. These practices reached peak popularity in the late 1800s, especially after the publishing of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in 1852. While minstrel shows waned in popularity in the early twentieth century, though vaudevillian “entertainment” continued the racist demonstrations, their images could be seen in W.E. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* (1915), radio and television program such as *Amos ‘n’ Andy* (1928), and children’s entertainment such as Tom and Jerry (1940), *Dumbo* (1941), and *Song of the South* (1946). More contemporary tropes that directly link to minstrel shows can be seen in media with tropes of “magical negroes” and white saviors such as *The Legend of Bagger Vance* (1998), *The Matrix* (1999), *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989) *The Blind Side* (2009), and *Green Book* (2018). See Bean (1996) and Taylor and Austen (2012) for more information.

<sup>xlii</sup> balls

<sup>xliii</sup> Miasma theory has currently fallen out of fashion in many western contexts, but it was once all the rage. Miasma is particularly foul air or vapor originating from decomposed matter. When people came into contact with these airs, it is thought that they could become violently ill, possibly leading to death. This theory was eventually replaced by germ theory in the late 1880s.

<sup>xliv</sup> For example, in eighteenth century Shanghai, British colonial officers implemented punishing fines and ditch-digging labor if locals did not sweep streets and clear their lived areas of home-heating and money-making materials such as manure. Colonizers associated the smells of dirty streets and dung with a lack of progress and chaos. See Huang 2016.

<sup>xlv</sup> The notion that “primitive” peoples lacked olfactory sophistication referred to the idea that civilized people relied less upon smell and more upon sight. Sigmund Freud (1962) even argued that Euro-americans lost scent sensitivity as a result of evolutionary progress, meaning all peoples who emphasized smell became deviant, abnormal, and beings of the past (See Byatt 2001).

<sup>xlvi</sup> I utilize the term “subjects” to underline the asymmetrical power dynamics and violence that existed within many of these studies.

<sup>xlvii</sup> See Almagor (1987); Classes, Howes, and Synnott 1994; Levi-Strauss 1964; Pandya 1993; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971, 1997 for more examples.

<sup>xlviii</sup> “Kites” has two meanings at the DEF, though they both revolve around the relationality of paper. Many incarcerated people pass notes to one another by attaching small pieces of paper to a paper clip that has a string tied to it. They then flick their wrists back and forth to move the weighted paper towards other people’s cells or windows. This practice is an effective form of note passing because many people can get information to others even though they remain locked in their cells. The second meaning for “kite” refers to DEF internal mailing processes. Workers and captives both speak about how incarcerated people send “kites” through the prison mail – such as grievance, sick, and other personal request forms. No one refers to letters that go outside the prison as kites, i.e. letters to family and friends.

<sup>xlix</sup> Captive sanitation workers. They are paid anywhere from 10 -80 cents per hour.

<sup>i</sup> I started paying attention to small movements, pauses, or freezes after working at a grocery store bakery before I received funding for this research. Every worker was expected to continuously move pastries, cookies, and breads into sellable packaging. I could never keep up and would often look to my fellow coworkers to see how they moved so quickly. But I began to notice that when someone used the intercom, every worker would freeze for no more than a second and then continue working. This pattern continued every time the intercom was used because all bakery employees were responsible if someone missed a call for the bakery department. So, it was my brief time at this grocery store that focused my attention on these small movements and freezes at the prison.

<sup>ii</sup> Three days on average. Some incarcerated people kept them for five days, some for only one night. Lockdowns, CO shakedowns, and disciplinary moves also influenced the length of time these materials stayed with individual people.

<sup>iii</sup> Many other materials move across the compound every day including weapons and contraband narcotics.

<sup>iiii</sup> I never observed the same actions happening with toothpaste and deodorant smells, but I it doesn’t mean these moments do not happen. Approximately five individuals told me that these particular smells calmed supposedly inanimate, moving materials.

<sup>lv</sup> Most captives cannot form a complete routine because, as described in chapter four, correctional officers do not always adhere to the administrated schedule.

<sup>lv</sup> I observed and interviewed every person who shared these specific hygiene materials.

<sup>lvi</sup> John Borneman (2015) has already begun this work in *Cruel Attachments: The Ritual Rehab of Child Molesters in Germany*.

<sup>lvii</sup> These individuals often connect sexual penetrative acts to masculinity and domination. Scholars have provided numerous examples: see Bell, Kaplan, and Karim 1993, Fair 2011, Kulick 1997.

<sup>lviii</sup> The currently much discussed incel movement shares many of these same beliefs. Incels, or involuntary celibate people (mostly men), refers to individuals who prefer to perform sexual acts with another person but has yet been unable to participate in the actions. Originally coined by a Queer woman to discuss her loneliness in a heteronormative world and seeking community, incel has now been coopted by misogynists who argue that as men they are naturally supposed to “use” women for sexual acts. Many of these men argue that women are supposed to cater to men’s natural sexual desire and that rape occurs because women no longer know their proper, inferior place in the world. As feelings of inadequacy rise, their masculine hysteria often results in

horrific racialized, classed, and heterosexist violence. The movement has launched a number of attacks (mostly targeting women) in Toronto, Isla Vista, CA, Roseburg, OR, and many other locations. For more information, see Baker 2016, Lamoureux 2018, and Tolentino 2018.

<sup>lix</sup> There are no openly gay, queer, or Trans male COs on the compound. Through my research, I observed a total of 12 men who identified as gay, queer, or bi though only four were “out” to their peers. There was a total of seven individuals who identified as Trans women, two people who identified as Two-Spirit, and one person who identified as non-binary. While there is a common conception that gay men are weak and inferior to heterosexual men and that Trans women were confused and perverse, many cis and non-queer captives formed lasting social and material relationships with individuals they deemed inferior. Though non-cis and non-heterosexual people were often bullied, beaten, and sometimes raped, cis and heterosexual captives traded materials, passed kites, watched television, shared their artwork, and even form sexual relationships with those they deemed inferior. Chesters were the only individuals excluded from all these shared activities.

<sup>lx</sup> Bulldogging refers to pushing another captive, knocking stuff out of their hands, taking their materials, verbally assaulting them, and making aggressive comments towards new arrivals. Heart-checks refers to practices where one captive punches or elbows a new person in the chest, at the location of their heart, to gauge their reaction. In this case, heart-check refers to the physical act and of investigating a person’s true gender and character.

<sup>lxi</sup> Cloth

<sup>lxii</sup> swallows

<sup>lxiii</sup> Specific times of the day when COs called for multiple events such as Chapel, Chow, Education, and Visits. During movement, individuals housed at level III are allowed to move to their approved locations. If they miss the call or don’t move at appropriate speeds, they would have to stay or be returned to their units.

<sup>lxv</sup> See “Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938” and “Voices Remembering Slavery: Freed Peoples Tell Their Stories” at the Library of Congress.

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/about-this-collection/>

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